

MEXICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES OF THE INTERSECTION OF
RACE AND GENDER IN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL: A CRITICAL RACE THEORY
ANALYSIS

by

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B.S., Kansas Newman College, 1994
M.S., Fort Hays University, 1999

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This qualitative multiple participant case study examined Mexican American women's experiences at the intersection of race and gender in public high school. Mexican American women's experiences cannot be isolated and described independently in terms of either race or gender. The intersection of race and gender for Mexican American women has not been investigated fully. The few studies that include Mexican American females focus on dropouts and emphasize at risk factors such as gender, race, socioeconomic status, and language. Consequently, the gaps in the empirical literature are caused in part by the shortage of research on Mexican American women and the propensity toward examining Mexican American women from the deficit perspective.

Critical Race Theory was the framework for the analysis and the interpretation in this study. The significant findings of this research support CRT, in that racism is prevalent and ordinary in the daily the lives of Mexican American females. The findings of the study included: First, racism is endemic and pervasive in public education. Second, colorblindness is the notion from which many educational entities operate. Third, the participants perceive social justice as the solution to ending all forms of racism and oppression. Finally, navigating the system is necessary to learn to be academically successful. The results contribute to the limited research on Mexican American women at the intersection of race and gender and the racism experienced in public high school to the overall CRT research in education, and in particular, to LatCrit research.

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	x
Acknowledgements	xi
Dedication	xii
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION	1
Background	1
The Historical Context of Education	2
History's Impact on the Present	8
Overview	8
The Historical Context of Race in the United States	10
Hegemonic Role of Race	12
White Privilege	14
Formation of Gender	16
Male and Female Roles	16
Colonial Women	17
Gender Schemas	18
Gender as a Category	19
Patriarchy	21
Double Jeopardy	22
Statement of the Research Problem	25
Purpose of the Study	25
Research Questions	27
Methodology	28
Definition of Terms	29
Limitations of the Study	31
Delimitations of the Study	32
Significance of the Study	33
Researcher's Perspective	34
Organization of the Study	36
CHAPTER 2 - Review Of The Literature	38
Introduction	38
Theoretical Framework: Critical Race Theory	41
Latino Critical Race Theory	44
Critical Race Theory: A New Song	45
Theme One: Racism is Prevalent	48
Theme Two: Interest Convergence	48
Theme Three: Historical Analysis	50
Theme Four: Storytelling	50
Theme Five: Interdisciplinary and Eclectic	53
Theme Six: Elimination of Oppression	53
Intersectionality	54
Critical Race Theory in Education	56
Race	59

Culture	62
Language	64
Gender.....	65
Mexican American and Woman	66
Invisibility of Mexican American Women	68
Roles of Mexican American Women.....	70
Educational Inequalities.....	71
Stereotypes	73
Tracking	75
Navigating Skills.....	77
Summary	84
CHAPTER 3 - Methodology	87
Introduction.....	87
Overview of Qualitative Research Design.....	88
Features of Qualitative Research	89
Purpose of the Research.....	90
Research Questions.....	91
Research Design of the Study and Rationale.....	92
Case Study	92
Characteristics.....	92
Truth.....	95
Pilot Study and Protocol Development.....	96
Selection of the Participants	99
Research Site.....	101
Role of the Researcher in Qualitative Research	102
Researcher Assumptions and Bias	103
Rapport.....	103
Ethics.....	104
Position of Researcher	105
Data Collection	106
Protection of Human Subjects	106
Timeline	106
Interviews.....	107
Observational Data and Visual Data.....	111
Digital Audiotape, Transcription, and Storage	112
Trustworthiness of the Data.....	112
Credibility	113
Transferability.....	118
Dependability	119
Confirmability	120
Data Analysis.....	121
Data Analysis Spiral	122
Data Managing.....	123
Reading, Memoing.....	123
Describing, Classifying, Interpreting.....	124
Representing, Visualizing	126

Summary	127
CHAPTER 4 - Findings	129
Introduction.....	129
Demographics	130
Personal Portrait of Participants	135
Personal Portrait: Carmela “an accepting person”	136
Personal Portrait: Francisca “ideal student”	138
Personal Portrait: Margarita “eccentric intellect”	140
Personal Portrait: Guadalupe a “fighter”	141
Personal Portrait: Teresa “a thinker”	142
Findings by Research Questions and Emerging Themes.....	144
Research Question 1: In retrospect, what were these Mexican American women’s perceptions of racism experienced while attending high school?.....	146
Theme 1: Racism Is Endemic and Pervasive.....	146
Counselors.....	147
Educators.....	149
Peers.....	152
Research Question 2: What racial obstacles did these Mexican American women experience in high school?.....	155
Theme 2: Colorblindness	155
Tracking	155
Stereotyping	157
Identity	160
Research Question 3a: What compelled these Mexican American women to complete high school and continue on to higher education despite racial obstacles?	163
Theme 3: Social Justice	163
Empowering All Students of Color.....	163
Advocating for All Students of Color.....	165
Providing Equal Opportunities for All Students of Color	166
Research Question 3b: What compelled these Mexican American women to complete high school and continue on to higher education despite racial obstacles?	169
Theme 4: Navigating the System.....	169
Maintaining the Status Quo	169
Resistance	171
Assimilation Into White Culture.....	173
Summary	176
CHAPTER 5 - Discussion	179
Summary of the Study	179
Discussion and Interpretation of The Findings.....	182
Racism is Endemic and Pervasive	183
Counselors.....	183
Educators.....	185
Peers	187
Colorblindness	188

Tracking	188
Stereotypes	191
Identity	193
Social Justice.....	196
Empower All Students of Color.....	196
Advocate for All Students of Color	197
Provide Equal Opportunities for All Students of Color.....	198
Navigating the System	200
Maintaining the Status Quo	200
Resistance	201
Assimilating into White Culture	203
Conclusions.....	204
Recommendations For Practice	207
Recommendations For Future Research	210
References.....	212
Appendix A - Interview Protocol.....	238
Prior to Interview	238
Conclusion of Interview.....	239
Appendix B - Interview Questions	240
Background.....	240
Tell me what your life is like right now (Belenky et al., 1986).....	240
Self-Description	240
Research Question 1	241
Research Question 2	242
Research Question 3	242
Conclusion	243
Appendix C - IRB Approval	244
Appendix D - Audit Trail.....	245
Methodological Documentation	245
Analytic Documentation	250
Personal Response	257
Appendix E - Interview Observation Checklist.....	262

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Summary of Pertinent Literature for Race, Gender, and Education	78
Table 3.1 Code Mapping: Initial Codes (to be read from bottom to top) (modified	124
Table 3.2 Themes of Intersection of Race and Gender: (a) racism is endemic and pervasive, (b) colorblindness, (c) social justice, and (d) navigating the system.....	126
Table 3.3 Qualitative Data Sources	126
Table 4.1 Demographic Information for Participants	132
Table 4.2 Research Questions and Emerging Themes of the Intersection of Race and Gender	145

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Dedication

This is dedicated with all my love to my grandmother who always knew I was “somebody,” and who will forever live in my heart.

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Because I, a mestiza,
continually walk out of one culture
and into another,
because I am in all cultures at the same time:

*Alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro,
me zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio.
Estoy norteadada por todas las voces que me hablan
simultaneamente.* (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 77)

Background

Historically and currently education has not been equally accessible or equitable for all students in the United States. Since 1790, the Naturalization Law defined who would and would not benefit from education. The law depicted the claim of racial superiority by Europeans and excluded American Indians, Asian Americans, African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, and women. The belief was that only men who were “free Whites” were entitled to benefit from education (Healey, 2007; Jones & Fuller, 2003; Spring 2001, p. x). Theorists, according to Watkins (2001), such as de Gobineau, Houston Chamberlain, and Madison Grant, felt that the White race was superior and other races were inferior by virtue of genetics (Amott & Matthaei, 2001; Ong, 2005). For instance, de Gobineau (1967) argued the Aryans’ (northern Europeans) blood purity was responsible for both their heroism and intellect. He claimed Aryan

racial integrity had to be maintained. Thus, segregating students by race was “a benefit to be so regarded” (Barrera, 1997; Orfield & Eaton 1996, p. 37; Valencia, 2006; Watkins, 2001). In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the belief was that the United States should be a Protestant Anglo-Saxon culture. Racist practices resulted in the segregation of African Americans, American Indians, Hispanic/Latino Americans, and Asian Americans, who were treated as peoples without a history (Martinez, 2001; Prins, 2007; Pulera, 2003; Santos, 1997; Spring, 2001).

The Historical Context of Education

The American educational system is considered the “backbone” of democracy and the most important component within society (Lynn, Bacon, Totten, Bridges, & Jennings, 2010; Spring, 2001, p. 5; Watkins, 2001). During colonial times, attaining an education was considered a means to improve and advance in society. Education was hailed as the means to end poverty, provide equal opportunity, and increase the wealth of the nation. The goal of teaching reading and writing was to ensure individuals read the Bible, were good workers, and obeyed the laws of society. These goals were written in the earliest colonial law regarding education, the *Massachusetts Law of 1642* (Spring, 2001). Before the common school movement, children of the elite attended private schools or had tutors, while the children of the poor attended field or dame schools. Education for White women was limited to basic reading and writing so as to read the Bible to be Godly (Spring, 2001; Watkins, 2001).

Colonial education, according to Watkins (2001), was designed to “control, pacify, and socialize subject people” (p. 1). Architects of colonial racial and ethnic ideology, such as Dr. Benjamin Rush, declared American Indians as unclean and

“strangers to the obligation both of morality and decency” (Adams, 1995; Takaki, 1990, p. xx). American Indians were “too lazy to work but even to think” (Adams, 1995; Takaki, 1990, p. xx). As for Blacks, Dr. Rush associated their skin color with leprosy. In keeping with colonial thinking, Mexican Americans were seen as a deficit, missing skills and knowledge, thus functioning as a “reserve labor force” (Healey, 2007; Segura, 1999, p. 78; Souto-Manning, 2006).

According to San Miguel and Valencia (1998),

The signing of the Treaty [Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, 1848] and the U.S. annexation, by conquest, of the current Southwest, signaled the beginning of decades of persistent, pervasive prejudice and discrimination against people of Mexican American origin who reside in the United States. (p. 353)

In the decades that followed, racial segregation became a standard practice in the Southwest between Mexican American and White students (Bowman, 2001; Fernandez, 2007; Prins, 2007; Ruiz, 2009; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998). The segregation of Mexican American students continued into the 20th Century. By 1930, patterns of widespread segregation, racism, racist acts by Whites, and the ideology of “separate but equal” framed the lives of Mexican Americans well into the twentieth century (Healey, 2007; Ruiz, 2009). According to Valencia (2005), school segregation was the culprit for school failure for Mexican American students.

In 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution provided equal educational opportunity. However, the interpretation varied at times allowing school segregation then declaring segregation unconstitutional. For instance, in 1872 the California school code stated that every school would be open for admission for all White

students between the age of five and twenty-one. At the same time, the code deliberately denied access to public education to Asian Americans, Mexican Americans, African Americans, and American Indians (Spring, 2001). And, in 1895 the Supreme Court decided that segregation of Whites from Blacks was constitutional. Thus, in *Plessy v. Ferguson 1895*, the Supreme Court ruled that segregation was reasonable as long as equal facilities were provided (Spring, 2001). Later in 1897, Texas courts ruled Mexican Americans were not White; therefore, they were segregated based on the provision that states had to separate students. And in California, Mexican Americans were categorized as Indians, not American Indians, since they were not the first American Indians in the United States (Bowman, 2001; Fernandez, 2007; Spring, 2001).

Brown v. Board of Education 1954 was a historic decision that struck down the separate but equal doctrine ruled by the Supreme Court in *Plessy v. Ferguson 1895*. *Brown* was a monumental turning point for both African Americans and society in outlawing racial discrimination (San Miguel, 2005; Valencia, 2005). According to historian Gilbert Gonzalez (1990), “the struggle to desegregate the United States has many points of origin, but one that we must not ignore is the *Mendez* case” (p. 73). The *Mendez v. Westminster 1946* was a class action lawsuit filed on behalf of Mexican American students in southern California (Bowman, 2001; Ruiz, 2009; San Miguel, 2005). The plaintiffs, Mexican American descendants, argued that separate but equal in public education violated their rights under the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The effects of segregation, according to a social scientist that testified for the plaintiff included: feeling of inferiority for Mexican American students, which promoted antagonisms and hostility; and, segregation impeded Mexican American

students from learning English. The defendant argued federal courts had no jurisdiction in *Mendez* because education was a matter governed by the state not federal courts. The federal court ruled for the plaintiffs in California. *Mendez* was the first attempt to end segregation by a federal court in which the plaintiff used social science and the legal argument that separate was not equal (Prins, 2007; San Miguel, 2005; Valencia 2005).

Although the *Brown* ruling had a significant impact on the nation, it had no immediate impact on Mexican American and Latino/a desegregation efforts. The *Brown* ruling was a result of an extensive and long legal strategy developed in the early 20th century by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The lawsuit was based on the constitutional right of the equal protection notion and the idea that only two races existed —Whites and Blacks (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Espinoza & Harris, 1997; Prins, 2007; San Miguel, 2005; Valencia 2005). According to Perea (1997), racial thought is structured around the “Black/White binary paradigm of race” (p. 1213), consequently omitting Mexican Americans. This Black/White binary paradigm dictates that non-White minority groups must compare their treatment to that of African Americans to gain redress (Anderson, 2007). Thus, the “prototypical” minority group is African American. Other groups such as Asian Americans, American Indians, and Latinos are minorities if their treatment parallels that of Blacks (Martinez, 2001; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 67). This binary thinking, according to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), can “conceal the checkerboard of racial progress . . . and hide the way dominant society often casts minority groups against one another to the detriment of both” (p. 71). Furthermore, this paradigm may distort history as well as the contributions of minorities (Anderson, 2007; Fernandez, 2007; Martinez, 2001; Perea, 1997).

In 1957, Mexican Americans filed the suit after *Brown, Hernandez v. Driscoll Independent School District*. The plaintiff argued segregation for Mexican Americans, the “other White,” which was what Mexican Americans were considered without any privileges, was illegal because segregation was only against Blacks as permitted by *Plessy* (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2006; San Miguel, 2005). The case won, but was limited to Mexican Americans in a small town in Texas (San Miguel, 2005). The struggle for legal protection came in 1968 when a local steelworkers’ union filed a lawsuit against the local school for segregating a high school in Corpus Christi. The legal strategy was based on the legal principles used by *Brown*; the strategy was to apply the *Brown* ruling to Mexican Americans (Ladson-Billings, 2006; San Miguel, 2005). On June 4, 1970, the federal district court ruled that *Brown* in general applied to Mexican Americans. Moreover, segregation was not “limited to race and color alone” (Cisneros, 1970/1971, p. 605). Further, it ruled that *Brown* applied to Mexican Americans in Corpus Christi, Texas. Mexican Americans were identified as an ethnic minority to bring them under the protection of *Brown*: “We can notice and identify their physical characteristics, their language, their predominant religion, their distinct culture, and of course their Spanish surnames” (Cisneros, 1970/1971, p. 608). The 1970s decision in *Cisneros* officially recognized Mexican Americans as an identifiable minority group in public education (San Miguel, 2005). In 1970, Dr. Thomas P. Carter published *Mexican Americans in School: A History of Educational Neglect*. According to Valencia (2006) *Mexican Americans in School* (Carter, 1970) was the “only existing book on Mexican American education” up to this time (p. 238). Historically, education for Mexican

American students in the United States has been one of inequity and segregation due to racism (Healey, 2007; Spring, 2001; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003).

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s campaigned to protest the dominance of Anglo-American culture and to end racism in educational practices. In 1974, the Supreme Court ruling in *Milliken* held that the pursuit of equality and integration should cease if it interfered with local government control. Later in 1995, the *Jenkins* decision ruled state and local control were more important than educational gains for minority students. Political leaders grasped the ideology even though it resulted in discrimination and inequality (Kozol, 1991, 2005; Orfield & Eaton, 1996; Spring, 2001). The racial injustices in education continue to this day. As late as the 1990s, African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, and American Indians were segregated from their White peers (Healey, 2007). The role of education became one in which “children in one set of schools are educated to be governors; children in the other set of school are trained for being governed” (Kozol, 1991, p. 176; Spring, 2001).

Currently, public schools are required to measure academic achievement as dictated by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). This act proposes to close the achievement gap between Whites and students of color. However, when scrutinized, NCLB, is a vehicle for social mobility for the privileged and socially constrains those who lack means (Gonzalez & Portillos, 2007; Thernstrom & Therstrom, 2003). Moreover, NCLB was never fully funded to support schools that are attended predominately by students of color. Latinos and other students of color have made advances in several educational areas, nevertheless, they still lag behind Whites. According to Souto-Manning (2005), when compared to Whites, “Latinos are still at a

considerable disadvantage in educational performance and opportunity” (p. 128). Part of the disadvantage is that students are missing certain skills and knowledge, which needs to be corrected (Lynn et al., 2010; Souto-Manning, 2006).

History’s Impact on the Present

Latinos are the fastest growing minority group in the United States. There are approximately 10 million Hispanic students in kindergartens, elementary, and high schools. In 2006 they made up about one-in-five public school students. In comparison to 1990, one-in-eight public school students were Hispanic (Garcia & Jensen, 2007; Hernandez, 2006; Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). However, according to the Pew Hispanic Center (2009), education for Latinos has long been characterized by high dropout rates and low college completion rates. While the graduation rate for White students is 75%, only about 60% of Black, Hispanic, and American Indians will earn a regular high school diploma (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004; Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004; Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007; Wise, 2008).

The Introduction to Chapter 1 progresses as follows: (a) overview, (b) statement of the research problem, (c) purpose of the study, (d) research questions, (e) methodology (f) definition of the terms, (g) limitations, (h) delimitations of the study, (i) significance of the study, (j) researcher’s perspective, and (k) organization of the study.

Overview

The focus of this study is Mexican American women, who also are called Hispanic, Latina, or Chicana in the research literature. The term Hispanic represents individuals whose national and/or cultural origins include the Spanish language and

culture. In the United States, Mexican Americans/Latinos represent the largest ethnic group (58.5%). Other Hispanic groups include Puerto Ricans (9.6%), Central and South Americans (8.6%), Cubans (4%), and other Hispanic countries (17.3%) (Jones & Fuller, 2003; Llagas & Synder, 2003; Orfield & Lee, 2007; U. S. Census, 2000). For the purpose of this research, the terms Hispanic, Latina, Chicana, and Mexican American will be used interchangeably to stay faithful to the terms used in the literature.

Many Hispanics prefer the term Latino/a. The term Latino/a is used more so in the Midwest and East, whereas, the term Hispanic is used in the West and Southwest. However, Hispanics or Latino/as are not all alike. They are a “rich and diverse portrait” comprised of diverse ethnicities, religions, cultures, nationalities, classes, abilities, and sexualities (Espin, 1997, p. ix). There is more variation within groups than across groups. According to Haney-Lopez (2000b) the “intragroup differences exceed inter-group differences,” that is, within versus between populations (Alva & de los Reyes, 1999; Espinoza-Herold, 2003; Haney-Lopez, 2000b, p. 166; Murphy, 2009; Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007; Valdes, 1997; Valencia, 2006).

In today’s global economy, the United States cannot afford to leave any child behind. Unfortunately, today many schools continue to fail students. More than 1.2 million students drop out of high school, roughly 7,000 each school day (Editorial Projects in Education, 2009; Wise, 2008). On all counts, students of color fare worse than their White peers. The growing amount of research and media coverage over the dropout crisis has emphasized the plight of both young men and women. Girls of color are at particular risk (National Council of Women’s Organizations, 2009; National Women’s Law Center & Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, 2009; Wise,

2008). President Obama acknowledged the needs of Latino children in his speech before the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in 2009. The President, referring to Hispanic students, stated, “Some children are enrolled in mediocre programs. And some are wasting away their most formative years in bad programs. That includes the one-fourth of all children who are Hispanic” (*The New York Times*, 2009). For many minority students, the education system perpetuates a preexisting divide (Wise, 2008). A historical context is needed in order to understand fully Mexican American women attending public schools in the United States. The following addresses the issues of (a) race, and (b) gender.

The Historical Context of Race in the United States

The categories of race provided elite dominant Whites their rationale and justification for the subordination of African Americans, American Indians, Mexican Americans, and Asian Americans. African Americans were enslaved; American Indians were subjected to seizure and appropriation of land and genocide; Mexican Americans were conquered and assimilated; and Asian Americans were excluded and exploited. Although the oppression differed in form, the fundamental basis was racialization, the result of a cognitive process of categorization or “racial category,” which established racial categories implemented by White force and ratified by White law (Adams, 1995; Anderson, 2007; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Gotanda, 1991, p. 16; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Martinez, 2001; Spring, 2001; Taylor, 2009b; Valian, 2005).

In 1806, under the jurisprudence of slavery, a person born to a slave woman was a slave; one born to a free woman was free. The burden of proof fell the on plaintiff, which required the court to decide the race. In Virginia, Judge Tucker devised a race test. The

test was based on the descendant's characteristics of "complexion," "a flat nose and wooly head of hair" (Haney-Lopez, 2000b, p. 163). Each of the characteristics marked the race. Race determined whether someone was free or slave. The decision of the court ultimately was based on "long, straight, black hair" (Haney-Lopez, 2000b, p. 165). The case of *Hudgins v. Wright* demonstrated one is Black if there is a single African descendent, or "one drop of blood," has a "flat nose" or a "woolly head of hair" (Adams, 2009; Gotanda, 1991, p. 24; Haney-Lopez, 2000b, p. 165).

The idea of dividing humans along White, Black, and Yellow lines is more social than scientific, although numerous efforts attempted to use science to justify racism. The notion of three races from highest to lowest: "Caucasoid," "Negroid," and "Mongoloid," is found in Count Arthur de Gobineau's *Essay on the Inequality of Races* in 1853-1855 (Haney-Lopez, 2000b, p. 166; Watkins, 2001). According to Gossett (1975), the nineteenth century was a quest to define and describe the differences in race. Physical characteristics such as: skin color, hair texture, facial, angle, jaw size, brain mass, frontal lobe mass, brain surface fissures, convolutions, and body lice, were used during this time (Bowman, 2001; Crenshaw, 1988; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Espinoza & Harris, 1997; Haney-Lopez, 2000b).

In 1909, Takao Ozawa, born in Japan to an English father and half-Chinese/ half-Japanese mother, applied for citizenship on the basis that he was a "White person" (Haney-Lopez, 2000b, p. 166; Spring, 2001). The Supreme Court rejected Ozawa's petition for citizenship. Ozawa was not "sufficiently 'White'" (Haney-Lopez, 2000b; Spring, 2001, p. 182). In *Ozawa v. United States 1922*, the Supreme Court, ruled Ozawa was denied citizenship because he was neither a free White nor of African descent

(Spring, 2001). In 1923, the Supreme Court made it explicit that the term, White person, meant an immigrant from Europe. Moreover, the intention of the Founding Fathers was to “confer the privilege of citizenship upon the class of person they knew as White” (Spring, 2001, p. 183). Thus, race and citizenship in the U.S. have been defined by laws and the courts (Anderson, 2007; Fernandez, 2007; Haney-Lopez, 2000a, b; Spring, 2001; Williams, 1989).

Race in the United States has been a long-standing topic, which has been rooted in inequalities and stereotypes. Race is a controversial issue because it forces individuals to confront certain facts. Race is accepted as a given based on faith (Fernandez, 2007). American society functions on the paradigm that an individual is either a member of the “majority” or “minority” —either White or non-White (Bowman, 2001, p. 175). According to Haney-Lopez (2000b), “Race may be America’s single most confounding problem, but the confounding problem of race is that few people seem to know what race is” (p. 165).

Hegemonic Role of Race

Hegemony is one of the most significant features of Whiteness. Hegemony is maintained by constructing racial categories and creating dichotomous oppositional difference, whereby one group is superior to another. Thus, Whites rule the others and maintain a popular system of “commonsense” ideas to support their right to rule (Barrera, 1997; Collins, 1986, 2000, p. 301; Owen, 2007; Spina, 2006). Hegemony lies in the domination of manipulating ideas, images, symbols, and ideologies. In the United States, hegemonic philosophies concerning race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation are often so pervasive it is difficult to conceptualize alternatives to them (Collins, 2000;

hooks, 1984). For instance, the ingrained and faulty notion of meritocracy is used to justify decisions made by the powerful about others (Donnor, 2005; Taylor, 2009b; Valian, 2005).

Morton's (1830) *Crania Americana* claimed intellectual inferiority was due to brain size. Using a sample of 144 American Indian skulls, he found a mean skull circumference of 82 cubic inches. Based on the skull measurements, he concluded American Indians were deficient in higher mental powers. This research was applied to other people of color and provided the early basis for scientific racism and eugenics. Later, Morton (1839) declared that the human species was separate since the beginning of time. Later, in 1850, Agassiz argued that while all men shared some commonalities, nevertheless races were created as separate species. Moreover, according to Agassiz, strict segregated societies were needed for the different races given their culture, habits, intelligence, and ability (Amott & Matthaei, 2001; Morton, 1830, 1839 cited in Watkins, 2001; Owen, 2007).

During 1870-1905, the eugenics movement gained currency in the United States. Throughout this period a hereditarianism justification became the reason for labeling dependents, insane, ill, and criminals as genetically inferior. According to Watkins (2001), during this period nascent eugenicists thought in terms of "restricting propagation" (p. 35). Furthermore, theorists between 1905 and 1930 associated feeble-mindedness, insanity, pauperism, and crime with heredity. The solution was "sterilization" of "defective" individuals (Amott & Matthaei, 2001, p. 237; Watkins, 2001, p. 35). Nativism, racism, and anti-immigrant emotions also provided fertile ground

for eugenics. The prevailing sentiment was that American institutions were incapable of changing or assimilating inferior races (Watkins, 2001).

Throughout American history, White supremacy has been premised on political, scientific, and religious theories, each of which relies on race for legitimization. Laws and customs helped create races out of a range of characteristics such as hair, complexion, facial features and “our very ways of talking, walking, eating and dreaming creating the oppositional force, a dark and foreign presence designated as the ‘other’” (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 1988, p. 1372; Crenshaw, 1995, p. 113; Haney-Lopez, 2000b, p. 164; Milner, 2008). The appearance of “other,” was synonymous with people of color, and women of all skin colors (Correa, 2010; Elenes, 1997; Gonzalez & Portillos, 2007; Guzman & Valdivia, 2004; Taylor, 2009b).

The social relations that constructed racial categories, based on the practice of classifying people in a “socially determined and socially determinative way,” were at the core of economic domination (Gotanda, 1991, p. 23). Whiteness defined a person as either free or slave. With Whiteness came economic benefits guarded as a prized possession allowed only to those who met the strict definition of White, defined by law since 1923 when the Supreme Court ruled a White person was of European descent. The law recognized and protected expectations based on White privilege (Harris, 1995; Milner, 2008; Owen, 2007). White privilege equated with property and could not be intruded upon without consent (Duncan, 2005; Harris, 1995).

White Privilege

The patriarchal view of property includes the exclusive right to possess, use, and transfer property. The attributes of property consist of the right to pass it on or keep it

and the right to exclude others. For instance, if a person of color is a victim of housing discrimination, the apartment that could have been rented to the person of color is still available to a White individual. Society believes everyone gets what he or she deserves, i.e., meritocracy, and the “belief in a just world” (Donnor, 2005; Tatum, 1997, p. 9; Taylor, 2009b). Whiteness as a construct evolved for the purpose of racial suppression. Thus, this system of meritocracy perpetuates racism when White privilege is not acknowledged (Bernal, 2002; Milner, 2008; Owen, 2007; Tatum, 1997; Taylor, 2009b). The law relied on historical racialization to assign substance to racial categories. Historical racialization embodies past and ongoing racial subordination to construct Whiteness not merely as a race but “race plus privilege” (Gotanda, 1991; Harris, 1995; p. 283; Matsuda, 1987; Tatum, 1997).

White privilege refers to the “numerous social advantages, benefits, and courtesies” that come with being a White person (Bernal, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 78; Leonardo, 2009). White privilege is more than White skin color. It also includes hair texture, nose shapes, culture, and language (Leonardo, 2009). According to Peggy McIntosh (1988), “White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks” (p. 1). It is a privilege White people enjoy and can rely on by reason of having White skin, including the reassurance they will not be followed by store clerks; individuals will not cross the street to avoid them; their achievements will not be regarded as a credit to their race; and their occasional mistakes will not be attributed to biological inferiority (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Jensen, 1998; McIntosh, 1988; Tatum, 1997).

White privilege is invisible yet it is the social norm for White people who are seen by society as individuals rather than members of a group (Bernal, 2002; Bowman, 2001; Jensen, 1998; McIntosh, 1988; Milner, 2008; Tatum, 1997). Whiteness is a category of privilege (Frankenberg, 1993; Harris, 1990a; Owen, 2007; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). According to Tatum (1997), “despite the current rhetoric about affirmative action and ‘reverse discrimination’ every social indicator, from slavery to life expectancy, reveals the advantages of being White” (p. 8). All Whites benefit from their color, yet not all benefit equally. For instance, factors such as socio-economic status, gender, age, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, and mental and physical ability play a role in accessing social privilege and power. For instance, a White female on state assistance does not have the same privilege as a wealthy White, heterosexual, male. In the case of the female, systemic disadvantages of sex and class intersect, but privilege is still there (Bernal, 2002; Crenshaw, 1989; Ludvig, 2006; Tatum, 1997).

Formation of Gender

To better understand women in society, it is important to examine women within the social and historical context (Perkins, 1983). The following section addresses: (a) male and female roles, (b) colonial women, and (c) gender schemas.

Male and Female Roles

Anthropologists who have examined sex roles have found great differences for assumed male and female roles. According to Weitzman (1979), Margaret Mead’s case study of three New Guinea tribes was the first study into variation of sex roles. In the Arapesh tribe, Mead noted the characteristics of both men and women included

cooperation, unaggressive, and responsive to needs of others — characteristics normally regarded as feminine or maternal in U.S. society. In a second society, the Mundugumor, Mead noted both men and women as aggressive, unresponsive, and individualistic — traits attributed to masculinity in U.S. society. Additionally, in Africa women have been great warriors whereas in New Guinea, men are prim and flirtatious, preoccupied with love potions and cosmetics to attract young ladies (Weitzman, 1979). According to Weitzman (1979), children are socialized in the U.S. from the time they are born by constantly reinforcing simple behaviors. Thus, around the age of six or seven the child is able to distinguish male and female roles or “gender constancy” (Tatum, 1997, p. 43). Sternglanz and Serbin (1974) note, “there is clear indication that modeling is a powerful technique for influencing children’s behavior” (p. 711). Thus, women in U.S. society have been socialized (Amott & Matthaei, 2001) into a learned role as evidenced in the earliest writings of the Founders of the United States.

Colonial Women

According to Lewis (1995), women are nowhere mentioned in the American Constitution. Scholars Hoff (1991), Kerber (1995), and Smith-Rosenberg (1992) (cited in Lewis, 1995), have suggested the exclusion of women in the Constitution was intentional— a reflection of the patriarchal assumption of the Founders that women had no role to play in government. This included Black slaves, who were considered property. The privilege of voting or holding office was conferred only to free White males with property. It should be noted that although White men could grasp the concept of White women as part of the newly formed nation, the notion that Blacks also could be included was more difficult to accept (Bell, 1990; Lewis, 1995). Thus, the first Federal

Naturalization Act of 1790, offered citizenship only to “free white” persons. As a result, Whites drew the boundaries between themselves and other nations; their first impulse was to “keep dark-skinned people out” (Lewis, 1995, p. 384). According to the *Dred Scott* 1857 ruling by Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, Blacks, whether free or slave, could not be a citizen of the United States (Anderson, 2007; Lewis, 1995).

Gender Schemas

Schemas are like stereotypes (Valian, 1999) except that schemas are more inclusive and more neutral. Individuals are seen not as people but rather as males or females. Thus, gender schemas, once invoked, work to disadvantage women by distorting perceptions. For instance, everyone has an unconscious hypothesis about males and females, such as males being taller than females. As a result, gender schemas are entrenched easily in society once they are in place (Valian, 1999).

Gender schemas, according to Valian (1999), support the notion that physical differences are confirmation of differences among people, even if the physical differences have no bearing on people’s competence or ability. Society reasons from extreme examples and from interpreting the extreme examples that a trait is more common than it is. Society tends to dichotomize and prefers to create two categories rather than more, and to view these categories as mutually exclusive. Thus, society refers to the “opposite” sex as if males and females have opposite traits rather than almost overlapping traits (Valian, 1999, p. 1048). As such, gender has emerged as a category of society. Gender is the social arrangement to legitimize one of the most fundamental divisions of society, to discriminate man from woman (Tatum, 1997; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

For clarification, the terms gender and sex need to be distinguished. According to West and Zimmerman (1987), “Sex is a determination made through . . . the criteria for classifying persons as females or males” (p. 127). The criteria may be determined by the genitalia at birth or chromosomal typing before birth. Therefore, assignment is established by application of the sex criteria. However, it is possible to assert membership in a sex category even though the sex criteria may not be met by the socially required characteristics of what it is to be a woman or a man. In contrast, gender “is the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions . . . appropriate for one’s sex category” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 127). Therefore, gender is what an individual does continually in interaction with others (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Gender as a Category

Gender is a socially constructed category based on social perspective and reproductive biology to shape the roles of males and females (Amott & Matthaei, 2001; Barlett, 1990; Gilligan, 1982; Healey, 2007; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2008). Gender is treated as a vestige of bias or domination— a framework from which society excludes or marginalizes those who are different (Crenshaw, 1993; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2008). For instance, stereotyping women as nurturing led to the hypothesis that a woman’s primary role is that of childrearing, a role that, if necessary, should be legally or physically enforced (Healey, 2007; Valian, 2005). This, in turn, led to the assumption that a woman is inferior (hooks, 1984; Ruiz, 1998).

Results from Piaget’s (1932) study (cited in Gilligan, 1982) indicate girls are less morally developed than boys. The assumption then is if a girl wants to be independent, she will have to learn to be like a boy. In a study done by Broverman, Vogel,

Broverman, Clarkson, and Rosenkrantz (1972) (cited in Gilligan, 1982) findings based on males indicated traits such as autonomous thinking, clear decision making, and responsibility for adulthood were associated with males and regarded as undesirable attributes in females. In other words, males are thought to be capable of independent action, ready for the task at hand, and doing the task for a reason. On the other hand, women are thought of as nurturing and as acting communally. In sum, “men act: women feel and express their feelings” (Healey, 2007; Valian, 1999, p. 1045). In Kohlberg’s (1958) development of moral judgment theory, females do not exist. According to Gilligan (1982), Kohlberg (1958), like Piaget, assumed the child was a White male.

All women have grown up having to deal with the historically, culturally, and socially engrained meaning based on the White male, which is at the core of most academic disciplines, methodologies, and theories, of what a woman should be. The most commonly accepted stereotype of women is that their thinking is emotional, intuitive, and personalized. This thinking has contributed to the devaluation of women’s minds and contributions (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Dubois, 2006; Espin, 1997; Hawkesworth, 2010). Women have come to know the pains of exclusion, the pervasiveness, and hurt. For instance, a woman leader sitting at the table with a male leader, all things being equal, loses to the male. She is less likely to obtain the automatic respect granted to men (Barlett, 1990; Valian, 1999). According to Belenky et al. (1986), information held as truth has been shaped by powerful and elite White males. These males have written history and set values that have become the standard for both males and females in U.S. society (Dubois, 2006; Elenes, 1997).

Patriarchy

Oppression is defined as the “absence of choices” (hooks, 1984, p. 5). In the United States, women are exploited and discriminated against on the basis of being female. However, patriarchy is structured in such a manner that women are both restricted and allowed some latitude of freedom by society. The extreme restrictions may lead women to ignore the area in which they are exploited and think they are not oppressed. For example, according to Valian (1999) women have progressed in all professions. Women are attaining more degrees in law, medicine, business, and the academic field. In addition, there is more equity in pay and rank when entering the profession. However, a woman today earns only 77 cents for every dollar earned by a man (Gunelius, 2008). The lower skilled the job is, the greater the wage disparity between men and women (Taylor, 2009b). The problem is that there is little progress for women in promotions, salary advancement, partnerships, and tenure (Valian, 1998, 1999). The silent majority in society are women who are beaten down both mentally and spiritually and are powerless to change their situation (hooks, 1984).

Women often believe the stereotype that male is synonymous with strength and power and female is synonymous with submission weakness, passivity, and nourishing the lives of others. This type of thinking is basic to all forms of social domination in U.S. society and promotes a stereotype of inherent differences between men and women. Society maintains a system of male domination and puts forth strategies for resistance to change, for example, the role of how a male or female should behave (hooks, 1984; Valian, 1999; Weitzman, 1979; Williams, 1987). In maintaining patriarchy, women are objects rather than subjects of discussions. Gender is more than a category, it is an

identity and the “core of who we are” (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 62; Bartlett, 1990; Ong, 2005).

Double Jeopardy

Anna Julia Cooper, born a slave and who later earned a Ph.D., initially used the notion of double jeopardy. Cooper wrote about the double enslavement of Black women whose dilemma was being “confronted by both a woman question and race problem” (King, 1988, p. 42). In 1904, likewise Mary Church Terrell wrote about women as “handicapped on account of their sex . . . and mocked because of their race” (King, 1988, p. 42). Historically, Black women have been affected by the intersecting oppressions of race, gender, and class (Collins, 2000). The oppression of double jeopardy suffered by Black woman due to their intersection of race and gender can by extension be applied to Mexican American woman (King, 1988; Simoniello, 1981).

Though women share multiple similarities, women of color experience unique circumstances due to race and gender (Correa, 2010; Cotera, 1977; Garcia, 1989; Hancock, 2007; Healey, 2007; Simien, 2007; Vera & de los Santos, 2005). The differences for women of color are what Chafe (1983) refers to as “profound substantive differences” (cited in King, 1988, p. 45). These substantive differences range in scope and are both institutional and cultural (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Prins, 2007; Tate, 1997).

Theories on gender and woman have been applied universally to women as a group. Upon closer examination, earlier research was limited to describing primarily the conditions of the college-educated, middle and upper class, married White women (Belenky et al., 1986; Correa, 2010; Frankenberg, 1993; Gilligan, 1982; Guzman &

Valdivia, 2004; hooks, 1984; Owen, 2007; Perkins, 1983; Ruiz, 1998; Valian, 2005).

Thus, the prototype of woman was White, middle-class, and college-educated for decades. The prototype of an ethnic minority is a Black male that is heterosexual (Bowman, 2001; Crenshaw, 2009; Espinoza & Harris, 1998; Hancock, 2007; hooks, 1984; Hull, Scott, & Smith, 1982; Smith & Anderson, 2005). These parallels led research to mask the differences for diverse groups by contending that each discrimination has a single, isolated effect, which employs an “either/or” stratification (Amott & Matthaei, 2001; Crenshaw, 1989; Harris, 1990a; Hancock, 2007; hooks, 1984; King, 1988; Simien, 2007, p. 264).

The “true woman [hood]” represented a White, middle-class female whose civilization was superior and who possessed virtues of “piety, purity, subordination, and domesticity” (Casteñeda, 1990; Dubois, 2006, p. 49; Perkins, 1983, p. 183; Welter, 1966). But Mexican American women were considered to be “dunces and drudges,” working endlessly, whose “only function was to produce children,” and prostituted by their Mexican American husbands (Casteñeda, 1990, p. 10; Correa, 2010; Ruiz, 1998; Timberlake & Estes, 2007, p. 403). Any other differences such as race, culture, or socioeconomic class, assume others who are “different” are a “deviant” from the norm (Casteñeda, 1997; Elenes, 1997, p. 359; Espin, 1997, p. 11; Fernandez, 2007; Harris, 1990a, p. 615; McCarthy, 1993). This dualistic thinking is central to the domination of Whites in Western society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; hooks, 1984; Owen, 2007). For instance, Mexican American woman were omitted from academic studies as though “Mexican women should not exist” (Espino, Muñoz, & Kiyama, 2010; Simoniello, 1981, p. 122) leading to the three decade old questions: “Are we the ‘forgotten’ women?”; “Are

we the ‘non-existent minority’?”; “Are we the ‘invisible minority’?” (Delgado, 1971; Escobedo, 1980; Casas & Ponterotto, 1983 cited in Cuadraz, 2005, p. 218) or, when they were included in studies, they were misrepresented by White women (Casteñeda, 1997; Correa, 2010; Frankenberg, 1993; Guzman & Valdivia, 2004; Simoniello, 1981). African American women’s experiences are perceived to be synonymous with that of heterosexual Black males (Crenshaw, 1989; hooks, 1984; King, 1988). Mexican American women are placed in the same category as all Spanish-speaking people (Espin, 1997; Fernandez, 2007; Guzman & Valdivia, 2004; Murphy, 2009; Simoniello, 1981; Tafoya, 2004; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003).

Between 1970 and 1980, Chicanas began to question “Which women’s experience?” and to investigate the structure of race, which affected them as women of color and in their traditional role as females (Shields, 2008, p. 302). They, like African American and Asian American women, began the struggle for equality and to end sex and racial oppression (Cuadraz, 2005; Garcia, 1989, p. 219). Moreover, Chicanas believed their analysis involved more than gender, because as women of color they also were affected by race. Thus, Del Castillo (1974) (cited in Garcia, 1989), argued Chicanas and other women of color were different “because we are oppressed people” (p. 229). The primary focus of the analysis was on race as a critical variable in interpreting the experiences of women of color. This expanded to include gender as a source of oppression (Garcia, 1989). For the first time in 1984, the National Association for Chicano Studies (NACS) addressed the issues of Chicana and Mexican American women who had remained “within the shadows of history” (Cuadraz, 2005; Garcia, 1989; Ruiz, 1998, p. 34). Thus, the 1980s was the “Decade of the Hispana” (Cuadraz, 2005, p. 220).

The 1990s were influenced by Gloria Anzaldua (1987) *Borderlands*, the first to suggest that in the process of straddling two cultures a hybrid identity is created and the understanding that women of color must be understood in the context of race and gender or intersectionality (Collins, 2000; Hancock, 2007; Vera & de los Santos, 2005).

Statement of the Research Problem

This research focused on the overarching problems of racial and gender discrimination against five Mexican American women in their high school public education. Mexican American women seeking an education face not one issue (race), but a second (gender), because of social stereotyping in an American educational system that is founded on race and gender inequities (Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, 2008; Frankenberg, 1993; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; McCall, 2005). Thus, this multiple participant case study explores (a) Mexican American women's perceptions of the intersection of race and gender in high school and (b) how Mexican American women overcame racial and gender obstacles (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Purpose of the Study

Mexican American women are the largest and fastest growing group of all Hispanic-origin groups (U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, 2000; Vera & de los Santos, 2005). Yet despite the population surge of Mexican Americans in the United States, much of the research on stereotyping discrimination experienced by people of color has focused on African Americans as the ethnic minority group (Carter, 1970; Cuadrez, 2005; Fernandez, 2007; Lanehart, 2009; Ludvig, 2006; Smith & Anderson, 2005). The silence and diversity of gender needs to be illuminated and expanded to

understand fully Mexican American women (Espin, 1997; Espino, Muñoz & Kiyama, 2010; Garcia, 1989; Russel y Rodriguez, 2008; Vera & de los Santos, 2005). Literature on Mexican American women is limited or has been ignored as if Mexican American women do not exist (Bernal, 2002; Espin, 1997; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Rolon-Dow, 2005; Simoniello, 1981). According to Montano and Burstein (2006), few researchers consider the factors of “ culture, [and] identity” (p. 174). In addition, Antrop-Gonzalez, Velez, and Garrett (2005) stated that the research done by numerous scholars on Latinos has focused mainly on their academic underachievement and race was seen as a problem or barrier (Anthrop-Gonzalez, Velez, & Garrett, 2005; Bonilla-Santiago, 1999; Gonzalez & Portillos, 2007; Lynn et al., 2010; Vaught, 2008).

Mexican American women have “a long and solid history of research . . . focused on matters of exclusion (Russel y Rodriguez, 2008, p. 309) which “barely touches the intersection between race and gender” (Correa, 2010, p. 426). It was not until the 1980s that three pieces of scholarship were published, *La Chicana* (Enriquez & Mirande, 1979), *Twice a Minority, Mexican American Women* (Melville, 1980), and *Mexican Women in the United States*, (Mora & del Castillo, 1980). In 1988, the first full-length book to address issues concerning Hispanic women and education appeared: *Broken Web: The Educational Experiences of Hispanic American Women* (McKenna & Ortiz 1988, cited in Cuadraz, 2005). In 1998, the “the first [book] in the women’s history of Mexican Americans” was written by Vicky Ruiz (Dubois, 2006, p. 59). Later, the first full study concerning Mexican American women and education, *From the Shadows: Mexican American Women in Twentieth-Century American* (Ruiz, 1988) was published. Anzaldua’s (1987) *Borderlands* and Bernal’s (2001) *Learning and Living Pedagogies of*

the Home: The Mestiza Consciousness of Chicana Students influenced the 1990s. These scholars had the “great responsibility of identifying the basic issues in her subject and laying out guidelines for future scholars to follow” (Dubois, 2006, p. 59). Consequently, Mexican American women’s experiences of “double jeopardy” due to their race and gender have been ignored (Correa, 2010, p. 425; Cuadraz, 2005; Nash, 2008; Rothenberg, 2005).

The focus of this research is the intersection of gender and race as defined earlier. The limited research conducted on Mexican American women reveals the need to expand understanding of what Mexican American women experience in public education. This study seeks to contribute to the literature that discusses the specific dilemmas of Mexican American women’s experiences due to race and gender (Bonilla-Santiago, 1999; Collins, 2000; Correa, 2010; Simoniello, 1981; Timberlake & Estes, 2007). The White heterosexual male experience has dominated research for so long that Mexican American women’s voices need to be taken out of the “shadows of history” and added to the literature (Belenky et al., 1986; Espino, Muñoz, & Kiyama, 2010; Fernandez, 2007; Ruiz, 1998, p. 34; Vera & de los Santos, 2005).

Research Questions

This qualitative multiple participant case study investigated the intersectionality of five Mexican American female participants in their public high schools as both women (gender) and Mexican (race). The research questions are:

1. In retrospect, what were these Mexican American women’s perceptions of racism experienced while attending high school (Bell, 1992; Collins, 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001)?

2. What racial obstacles did these Mexican American women experience in high school (Alva, 1991; Collins, 2000; Yosso, 2005)?
3. What compelled these Mexican American women to complete high school and continue on to higher education despite racial obstacles (Bonilla-Santiago, 1999; Delgado, 1989; Solórzano et al., 2005)?

Methodology

This multiple qualitative case study research was designed to investigate the intersection of race and gender as experienced by five Mexican American females while attending public high schools. Mexican American females, due to their status, face not one issue (race), but also a second (gender). Multiple case studies, according to Yin (1981a), allow a researcher to draw conclusions from groups of cases. Thus, the five cases collectively strengthen the results and increase confidence in the study (Tellis, 1997). Critical Race Theory was the theoretical framework used for analyzing and interpreting the data. The data analysis spiral (Creswell, 2007) was used to analyze the data. Themes were developed through the use of coding and categorizing.

Participant selection was based on convenience, purposeful, and criterion sampling. The researcher sought to investigate a subgroup whose experiences are likely to be the same (Polkinghorn, 2005). Participants were selected who are: (a) public high school graduates of the United States, (b) Mexican American females, and (c) doctoral students. The methodology is addressed in depth in Chapter 3.

Definition of Terms

To remain faithful to the literature cited in this study, I use the terms Hispanic, Mexican American, Latino/a, people of color, or Chicano/a when directly citing specific research. Otherwise, Mexican American is the term used for this case study for consistency. The reason for the multiple terms is that currently the United States Census 2000 categories for race include White alone, White or African American alone, American Indian and Alaska Native alone, Asian America alone, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. In addition, two categories for ethnicity are included, Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census 2000, 2009).

Cantadora: A witness to one's own lived realities or "story teller" (Espin, 1997, p. ix).

Civil rights movement: Efforts to advance the interests of minorities to achieve equal citizenship (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Culture: Behaviors, values, language, and beliefs shared by a human group (Banks, 2006).

Critical Race Theory: A theory, which seeks to "transform the relationship between race, racism and power" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 144). One basic principle is that racism is ordinary, thus making it difficult to address even though experienced by people of color on a daily basis.

Dominant Group: The group in the United States that has the most power and privilege, heterosexual White males (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2003).

Double Jeopardy: Woman of color who are "confronted by both a woman question and a race problem" (Cooper, cited in King, 1988, p. 42).

Ethnocentrism: A belief of one's own ethnic group's superiority to others (Lindsey et al., 2003).

Gender: Activities emerging from claims of membership in a sex category (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Hispanic: Persons of Iberian or Spanish ancestry; used less than the terms Latino or Chicano (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Intersectionality: The examination of overlapping traits such as: race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation, and how their combination plays out in a variety of settings (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 51).

Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit): Explains Latina/Latinos' multidimensional identities and oppression based on race, class, gender, language, and immigration status (Solorzano & Bernal, 2001).

Latino/as: Persons of Latin American ancestry residing in the U.S. that share a culture, heritage, and language (Banks, & Banks, 2005; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Merit: Individual worthiness (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Mestiza: The art of transforming from one culture to another (Anzaldua, 1987).

Oppressed: The "absence of choices" experienced by individuals (hooks, 1984, p. 5).

People of color: Groups who have experienced discrimination because of their physical characteristics. For instance, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latino/as in the United States are referred to as people of color (Banks & Banks, 2005, p. 451).

Race: A term that seeks to divide groups according to physical traits and characteristics; a social construction with no scientific or biological basis (Banks & Banks, 2005; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Racialization: Method of creating race, such as Latinos and infusing a racial element into the situation (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Racism: A system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress African American, Latinos, Asian Americans, Pacific Americans, and American Indians based on ethnicity, culture, mannerism, and physical characteristics in the United States. In other words, the inherent belief of superiority of one race over all others and the right to dominate them. In addition, it has two components: First, it is the belief that one's ethnic group is superior to others. Second, it creates an environment where that belief is perpetrated either in a direct or subtle manner (Lindsey et al., 2003; Milner, 2008; Solórzano, 1998, p. 124).

Sex: Determination made through the application of socially agreed upon biological criteria for classifying an individual as either male or female (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

White: White race to include a "set of concepts and privileges associated" with being White (Lynn & Parker, 2006, p. 263).

White Privilege: Term that refers to countless social advantages, benefits, and courtesies that come with being a member of the dominant race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Limitations of the Study

This study has three limitations:

1. The Mexican American participants all attend the same college and university and represent different experiences in relation to education, geographic mobility, and age.
2. The participants are a convenience sample.
3. The participants for this study have been interviewed for previous research.

However, none of the previous research used Critical Race Theory as a theoretical framework.

Delimitations of the Study

The delimitations of the study are two.

1. The sample is nonrandom, convenience, and purposeful. The participants are from an available population, which is common in qualitative research.
2. The study does not generalize to different populations or high schools because the participants are all Mexican American females who attended different high schools and generalizability is not an outcome sought in qualitative research.

The five Mexican American female doctoral students were conveniently and purposefully selected due to the limited number of Mexican American female doctoral students attending Midwestern University, making the sample nonrandom and convenient. The participants came from different high schools in the Midwest. Moreover, the high schools were of different sizes and demographics. Therefore, generalizability to other high schools in the Midwest cannot be replicated.

Significance of the Study

Women in general have been excluded from research studies. For example, earlier research on moral development and developmental psychology was conducted by men about men and then generalized to the lives of White women (Gilligan, 1982; Vera & de los Santos, 2005). In other studies, gender often is treated as a dependent variable instead of an independent variable (Belenky et al., 1986; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). Moreover, few studies have focused on Mexican American women who struggle with the intersectionality of race and gender and who often are left at the margins of education. Especially limited is in-depth literature about Mexican American women in the United States, which exposes the need for research in this area (Espin, 1997; Garcia, 1999; Montano, 2006; Rios & Alvarez, 2006; Simoniello, 1981; Spina, 2006).

This study of Mexican American women will contribute to the research literature about Mexican American women, whose voices rarely are heard in studies. Rather than the propensity to generalize the White middle class female prototype's experiences to Mexican American women, this research gives voice to Mexican American women's realities and experiences, eliminating their oppressed silence (Belenky et al., 1986; Bonilla-Santiago, 1999; Espin, 1997; Freire, 2008; Garcia, 1999; King, 1988; Ludwig, 2006; Vera & del los Santos, 2005). Specifically, this research focused on the intersection of race and gender as experienced by five Mexican American females during high school. Their descriptions and navigation that propelled them to continue their education as far as doctoral programs add a significant dimension to the research on Mexican American women. Finally, this study adds to CRT and LatCrit by acknowledging the lived

experiences of Mexican American women who experience double jeopardy and aims to make visible the inequities through their stories.

Researcher's Perspective

The researcher has three major assumptions about racism:

1. Women of color are not able to separate themselves from their ethnicity/race.

In other words, a Mexican American woman is simultaneously both a female and a woman of color. Therefore, her experiences of oppression and racism constitute double jeopardy.

2. The “power of race as both a social construction and as a powerful reality in structuring people’s lives is not new” (Bell, 1992; Delgado, 1995; Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002, p. 68). Mexican American women are often “at risk,” which most frequently is code for most individuals who are minorities, have low socioeconomic status, show low/average achievement, have high potential for dropping out of school, often are truant, high rate of misbehavior, and are perceived as culturally deficient. I recognize that my intersectionality of race and gender stereotypes me in a group who often copes with constrictions placed on them for being Mexican American. The researcher contends the effects of society shape how Mexican American women are allowed to think and feel about themselves and the culture.
3. The structure of education maintains and promotes racial inequalities both in and out of the classroom in subtle ways. These inequalities manifest themselves by Mexican American women’s lack of representation in advanced placement classes and honors programs.

As a Mexican American woman and by virtue of my marginal status, I am more empathetic to shared stories of Mexican American women's realities of racism. My conviction is that as a Mexican American woman, other Mexican American women will be more comfortable sharing with someone who shares their ethnic group. Moreover, I believe my experiences of racism in high school are not unique.

In high school, I was part of the 10% or so Latinas who would be graduating. The high school was pleased with their high graduation rate among Latinas and had counselors visit with us about our future plans. The thought of graduating and continuing with my education was short lived as I listened and watched the counselor fill out forms. I was told that as a female I should consider clerical work. Moreover, given my race, this was the pinnacle of what I could achieve.

To continue with my education, I learned to isolate and detach myself. For instance, my White peers mocked and laughed at my accent and for speaking the way I did. For years, starting with my first day at school, they chased me and told me "Go home, wetback!" I never complained to my teachers or principal; they were doing the same. They, too, ridiculed and made racial comments about me and to me.

Even though I put up with racism from both staff and peers, I wanted to take other academic courses besides the basics. Therefore, I went and visited my teacher and principal. This time my teacher asked if I was documented and told me since I had not yet finished high school, I probably would not receive a diploma. The principal advised me to "stay out of trouble and don't get caught in the bathroom smoking pot!" I had never caused any problems or gotten into trouble in school. I realized, as I walked by the

other classes, that they were only for smart White kids, that I really must be a “dumb Mexican American” as my White peers and teachers often called me.

These lived experiences with racism shaped my thinking about who I was. Eventually, I realized my skin color would determine my treatment by the culture. To cope, I took my “proper place” (Arriaza, 2004; Fernandez, 2002; Woodson, 1933, p. xiii) by keeping silent.

People of color have been historically “misrepresented, exploited, silenced, and taken for granted in education” (Dillard, 2000; Milner, 2007, p. 388; Shah, 2004; Williams, 1989). Some researchers have given Whites the benefit of having their beliefs and views valued over those of people of color (Milner, 2007; Tillman, 2002). Consequently, available literature often refers to minorities as academically challenged, “culturally disadvantaged,” or a “lower class culture,” with a focus on assisting them to catch up and be more like “us” — their White peers, thereby perpetuating the deficit model of being defective in some way (Barrera, 1997, p. 5; Castro, 2010; Delgado, 1993b; Solorzano, 1997). Thus, while it is not only students of color who are in the “lower class culture,” they are overrepresented due to historical reasons including discrimination based on race. Consequently, dismissing race and gender as part of a Latina’s life places her experiences at the margins (Barrera, 1997; Darder, Torres, & Gutierrez, 1997; Espin, 1997; Fernandez, 2002; hooks, 1984; King, 1988; McIntosh, 1988; Souto-Manning, 2006).

Organization of the Study

This is a qualitative multiple participant case study. The purpose of this study was to investigate Mexican American women’s perceptions of racism in public high school

due to double jeopardy. This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1: Introduction, investigated the purpose and historical background of education, race and gender for the study of Mexican American females in public high school. Chapter 2 reviews literature on women of color, Mexican American women, Critical Race Theory, and the intersection of race and gender. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used to guide the study. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study. Chapter 5 discusses the findings and “savage inequalities” (Kozol, 1991, p. 83) of race as it intersects with gender in public high schools as narrated by Mexican American females through their counterstories (Crenshaw, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

CHAPTER 2 - Review Of The Literature

Introduction

This qualitative multiple participant case study investigated race and its intersection with gender as experienced by five Mexican American women in public high schools. The literature review addresses Critical Race Theory (CRT), which is the theoretical framework used for analysis and interpretation of the data in this study. Race, a central tenet of CRT, maintains race is used to racialize minority groups through stereotypes. Closely related to racialization is the notion that each race has its own origins and history, or as it is known in CRT –intersectionality. That is, no individual has a single unitary identity. For instance, a Mexican American woman experiences the world in different ways due to being both a woman and Mexican American. However, gender, as researched by Baxter Magolda (2004), Belenky et al., (1986), Davis (2008), Gilligan (1982), Guzman and Valdivia (2004), Frankenberg (1993), and Welter (1966), represents the White college-educated woman, who is depicted as the successful role model for all women. Thus, the experiences of Mexican American women often are ignored, misrepresented, or subsumed under the prototype of the heterosexual African American male. Consequently, Mexican American women are kept out of sight, out of mind, and out of “the knowledge” of an education (McCall, 2005; Williams, 1989, p. 2142).

Critical Race theorists, e.g., Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995); Smith-Maddox and Solórzano (2002); and Solórzano and Bernal (2001), contend that current literature on people of color is flawed by its own theoretical and conceptual limitations. Carter and Goodwin (1994), McCarthy (1993), Secada (1989), and Watkins’ (2001) work

emphasizes the dimension of race, which has raised other concerns over the inequality of American education, for instance, how education has failed to educate women and minorities. However, it is impossible to understand fully the significance of what it means to be a Mexican American woman without appreciating the way gender intersects with race (Cuadraz, 2005; Gonzalez & Portillos, 2007; Guiner & Torres, 2002; McCarthy, 1993; Russel y Rodriguez, 2008; Tafoya, 2004). Educational scholars generally agree that race is linked to other social dynamics, such as class and gender (McCarthy, 1993; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Zarate, Bhimji, & Reese, 2005). Consequently, research has failed to capture fully the realities of the intersection of race, class, and gender.

Much research has focused on socioeconomic status, culture, and language as barriers to educational success (Bowman, 2001; Crenshaw, 2009; O'Connor, 2002; Weis, 1993). More examination and explanation are needed regarding the struggles of students of color and their access to a quality education (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001). Analyses do not recognize the underlying theme of racism in U.S. public schools for Mexican American women. Moreover, according to Huber, Johnson, and Kohli (2006) and Critical Race Theory scholars Delgado and Stefancic (2001) and Matsuda et al. (1993), students who experience racism cannot recognize or name racism because the experiences of educational inequalities are internalized within the students themselves. To understand better the racism Mexican American women are faced with every day they walk into school, Critical Race Theory has been adapted for educational research (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado, 1989; Ladson-Billings & Tate,

1995; Matsuda, 1989; Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993; Montoya, 1994; Solórzano, 1998; Tate, 1997).

Traditionally, White feminist research has focused on the experiences of only White women and issues of power and gender. It has a tendency to be written from a White middle to upper class perspective in which Whiteness is the norm. According to Russel y Rodriguez (2008) “research on Chicana-Mexican feminism has focused on matters of exclusion” (p. 309). Only recently White feminist scholarship discovered the concept of intersectionality, hailing it as “the most important contribution that women’s studies has made so far” and whose origins are credited to Critical Race Theory (Davis, 2008; Hawkesworth, 2010; McCall, 2005, p. 1771). Finally, White feminist research is not situated to carry the struggle beyond issues of gender and power to address the intersections of race and gender, i.e., oppression and marginalization, experienced by women of color — Mexican American women — on a daily basis (Correa, 2010; Crenshaw, 1989; Frankenberg, 1993; McCall, 2005; Nash, 2008)

It is the purpose of this study to investigate the participants’ experiences of racism as they intersect with race and gender while they attended public high schools, and to challenge the notion that schools bear minimal responsibility for the stressful events of racism endured by Mexican American women who want to “be somebody” (NWLC & MALDF, 2009; Quiroz, 2001, p. 342). Currently, little empirical research has focused on Mexican American women who are successful and have overcome racial barriers in education (Alva, 1991; Padron, Waxman, & Huang, 1999). Therefore, researching and including the voices of racially marginalized groups’ experiences through storytelling has the power to alleviate the sickness of racism for both the teller and reader (Crenshaw,

1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Thus, this research will add to the research literature about Mexican American women's educational experiences, which currently are not addressed adequately, in particular regarding the intersection of race and gender.

This chapter reviews literature on Critical Race Theory and the inequalities that impact Mexican American women regarding race, gender, and education in the U.S. public education arena. The discussion in this chapter is organized into the following six parts (a) Critical Race Theory, (b) intersectionality, (c) race, (d) culture, (e) gender, (f) inequalities of education, and (g) summary.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Race Theory

Mari Matsuda (1991) defines the purpose and goal of Critical Race Theory as:

The work of progressive legal scholars of color who are attempting to develop jurisprudence that accounts for the role of racism in American law and that work towards the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination. (p. 1331)

Race, educational, and gender research shows differences in experiences, access, and findings across different racial groups with some groups privileged and others disadvantaged. A powerful concept used to explain racial inequities is Critical Race Theory. Critical Race Theory recognizes the power of race as a social construct and how it shapes individual lives. Critical Race Theory theorists (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Matsuda et al., 1993; Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002) recognize that race is central to the lives of individuals. For Mexican American women, the intersection of race and gender poses “double jeopardy” (Correa, 2010, p. 425;

Crenshaw, 1989; King, 1988; Simoniello, 1981). Due to their marginalized status, Mexican American women are more likely to internalize their experiences. Moreover, by accepting their subordinate status, they may feel they deserve their maltreatment and “therefore not explicitly recognize or subsequently report them [experiences] as being discriminatory” (Karlsen & Nazroo, 2002, p. 625; Solozano, 1997).

The development of CRT was influenced by Critical Legal Studies (CLS), which developed out of several seminal events (Taylor, 2009a). Critical Legal Studies emerged during the Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam War. The CLS group consisted mostly of White law professors, who separated themselves from dominant liberal approaches to law and legal education. The group argued that the power of certain groups over other groups needed to change. Moreover, the CLS group insisted that current U.S. law was based on arbitrary categories and decisions that advanced the established power in society by concealing injustices under a pretense of legitimacy. The Civil Rights movement in the 1960s appeared to slow in its ability to address racial injustices. Before long, scholars of color began asking their White colleagues to develop an analysis, looking not only at race and racism, but also how race itself is treated (Matsuda et al., 1993).

By the 1970s, an eclectic and dynamic form of legal scholarship evolved (Taylor, 1998). Critical Race Theory became the response to the stalled progress in traditional Civil Rights litigation. According to Critical Race Theory scholars (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Matsuda et al., 1993; Yosso, 2005), it was obvious that many who were active in the Civil Rights movement were increasingly unable to prove any significant form of racial justice.

By the mid-1980s, a small group of legal scholars of color, such as Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado, produced a small, yet significant body of scholarship. Soon others like Kimberlé Crenshaw, Lani Guinier, Angela Harris, Charles Lawrence, Mari Matsuda, and Patricia Williams, joined Bell, Freeman, and Delgado (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Taylor, 1998). The group's identity began to form around "shared themes, methodologies, and voices that were emerging" (Matsuda et al., 1993, p. 5).

The newly formed group began to borrow from and critique works on: liberalism, Marxism, the law and society movement, Critical Legal Studies, White feminism, and conventional civil rights. In addition, the relationships among "naming one's own reality," knowledge, and power were examined (Delgado & Stefancic, 2005, p. 10; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 57; Matsuda et al., 1993). From Critical Legal Studies, the group borrowed the idea of legal indeterminacy, that not every legal case has one right outcome. Rather, emphasizing one line of authority over another or interpreting one fact differently than one's adversary may cause most cases to be decided differently. Next, the group researched White feminist insights and integrated the relationship between power and construction of social roles into CRT. Finally, the group studied conventional Civil Rights thought, seeking to address historic wrongs and insisting that legal and social theories have consequences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Also identified was majoritarian or self-interest of the dominant culture as an important element in the flow of Civil Rights legislation and enforcement, which revealed how the law often benefits Whites more than the racially oppressed (Matsuda et al., 1993; Taylor, 2009b; Williams, 1990).

Scholars of the newly formed movement created a language and literature grounded in the law to address past wrongs, which the CRT movement felt Critical Legal Studies did not address fully. For instance, Critical Legal Studies did not challenge the law or adequately deal with the experiences of people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, 2001; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Rolon-Dow, 2005; Tate, 1997). New forms of scholarship began to emerge: personal histories, parables, chronicles, dreams, stories, poetry, fiction, and revisionist histories. In addition, more attention was given to audience, those for whom the scholarship was being written. Though not unique, legal scholars of color frequently focused on the race-centered endeavor to specify the concern of the movement. In the late 1980s, this scholarship became known as Critical Race Theory (Matsuda et al., 1993). The scholarship pointed to society's acceptance of racism as ordinary, the phenomenon of Whites allowing Blacks to progress as long their own self interests are promoted (interest convergence), and the effects of European colonialism (Bell, 1980, 1992; Milner, 2008; Taylor, 2009b).

Latino Critical Race Theory

In 1995 Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCrit) emerged as a new subgroup of Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, 2001; Fernandez, 2002; Price, 2010; Valdes, 1996, 1997). Under the umbrella of CRT, LatCrit has developed its own literature and set of priorities. In other words, "LatCrit is supplementary and complementary to critical race theory" (Valdes, 1996, p. 26). LatCrit draws on Chicano/o Studies and civil rights issues. In relation to civil rights, LatCrit proposes to advance from the Black/White paradigm to Black-White-Brown tertiary. LatCrit seeks to advance both critical literature and thought with issues that affect all Latinas/os such as,

ethnicity, culture, identity, phenotype, sexuality, immigration and citizenship, language rights, bilingual schools, internal colonialism, sanctuary for Latin American refugees, and census categories for Hispanics (Bernal, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Gonzalez & Portillos, 2007; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001).

LatCrit theory is conceived as an anti-subordination and antiessentialist project that attempts to “link theory with practice, scholarship with teaching, and academy with the community” (Fact Sheet:LatCrit, 2000; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 312).

According to Valdes (1997), only time will determine the outcome of LatCrit theory and praxis.

This qualitative research did not incorporate or use LatCrit for investigation or analysis. The researcher’s rationale included: (a) LatCrit is an extension of CRT, (b) CRT is a recognized framework for the intersectionality of race and gender and this study did not investigate language, citizenship/immigration status, internal colonialism, sanctuary, census categories, or phenotype, and (c) because LatCrit recently emerged as a theory, it is still under “construction” (Valdes, 1997, p. 1087).

Critical Race Theory: A New Song

Although Critical Race Theory began as a movement in law (Bell, 1988, 1992; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado, 1987; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Matsuda, 1987) it is no longer a narrow subspecialty of jurisprudence for a small group of academic lawyers. Critical Race Theory has exploded into literature read in education, cultural studies, English, sociology, comparative literature, political science, history, and anthropology around the world. Critical Race Theory is a “new scholarly song—even if to some listeners [the] style is strange” (Bell, 1992, p. 144).

Critical Race Theory dares to treat race as central to law and policy in the United States and looks beyond the notion that racism can be eradicated by getting rid of ignorance or encouraging everyone to “get along” with each other. Though not every Critical Race Theory scholar subscribes to all the tenets, many would agree on the first three of six tenets, which shape CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Matsuda et al, 1993; Taylor, 2009a).

1. Racism has been a normal and daily part of society, embedded in political and legal policy, which makes it unrecognizable. Racial categories have complex, historical, and socially constructed meaning that insure the superiority of Whites (Bell, 1992; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Prins, 2007; Valdivia, 2002).
2. Tenet two sometimes is called interest convergence, which is the notion that racism advances the “self-interests of Whites” (Castagno & Lee, 2007; Lopez, 2003, p. 84; Milner, 2008). For instance, although it appears advances are being made for minorities, it advances at a slow and incremental pace so as not to upset the status quo and maintain the dominant status of Whites. Thus, racism advances the interest of both Whites (materially) and working-class people (psychically) through interest convergence (Bell, 1980; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 7; Matsuda, 1987). In addition, Critical Race Theory supporters point to political and judicial systems that have eliminated obvious hateful expressions of racism yet ignored the backlash in courts and against individual rights for marginalized groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, 2001; Lynn & Parker, 2006).

3. Critical Race Theory challenges ahistoricism and insists on a historical context of the law. Critical Race Theory contends that the U.S. political, legal and educational system is based on Whites having certain unalienable rights to property and capital. For instance, American Indians and other individuals were expected to provide these rights in the form of land (American Indians and Mexican Americans) and forced labor (African American, Mexican Americans, and immigrants). Thus, according to CRT theorists, current inequalities and social practices are linked to earlier periods in history. Consequently, racism has contributed to advantage some groups and disadvantage others based on race (Bernal, 2002; Bowman, 2001; Matsuda et al., 1993; Taylor, 2009a).
4. Critical Race Theory insists on the recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color. In other words, through the use of storytelling, people of color can narrate their experiences with racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).
5. Critical Race Theory is interdisciplinary and eclectic.
6. Critical Race Theory works toward eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression through social transformation (Matsuda et al., 1993. p. 6).

Critical Race theorists argue that while the overt violence of racist behavior has lessened, racism itself has increased. The everyday actions of racism are automatic, non-verbal ways of insinuating that people of color are inferior. Thus, CRT directs attention towards the broader racism of society where tradition maintains racist practices (Lynn & Parker, 2006). Although CRT initially focused on Civil Rights legislation, which resulted

in a Black versus White dichotomous situation, women and people of color felt their oppression could not be understood in terms of Black/White, gender, immigrant, or history. Thus, over the years, CRT has expanded to include the experiences of women, Latina/os, American Indians, and Asian Americans (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Yosso, 2005). Critical Race Theory views race as key to policies in the United States. The CRT movement built on both Critical Legal Studies and radical feminism. Moreover, CRT was inspired by individuals like Martin Luther King, Jr., W.E.B. DuBois, Rosa Parks, and Cesar Chavez (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, 2001). Critical Race Theory exposes the manner in which social, political, and legal practices promote negative outcomes for oppressed individuals. Furthermore, CRT criticizes the colorblind notion of law, which implies the law is race-neutral. Likewise, CRT challenges society's position on democracy, freedom, and justice for all (Bernal, 2002; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Lynn & Parker, 2006).

Theme One: Racism is Prevalent

Racism is “ordinary, not aberrational—‘normal science,’ the usual way society does business” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 7). For people of color, this means experiencing racism on a daily basis (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In addition, the nature of racism blinds individuals to its existence in society. Racism runs deep and is not always recognized in its various forms unless it is blatant or overt (Harrell, 2000; Rolon-Dow, 2005).

Theme Two: Interest Convergence

According to Donnor (2005), interest convergence is “an analytical construct that considers the motivating factors . . . to eradicate racial discrimination or provide remedies

for racial injustice” (pp. 57-58). Whites may agree that people of color are entitled to constitutional protection and that injustices can be “remedied effectively without altering the status of whites” (Bell, 1980, p. 522). Those in power do not oppose policies that do not discriminate against people of color, as long as they do not have to change the system of dominant White privilege (Milner, 2007); i.e. “Whites will tolerate and advance the interest of people of color only when they promote the self-interest of Whites” (Lopez, 2003, p. 84). For instance, the State of Arizona stood firm against recognizing the King Holiday, citing high costs. As a result, when the members of the National Basketball Association (NBA) proposed the NBA All-Star Game or the Super Bowl not be held in Arizona because of its failure to recognize the King Holiday, the verdict was reversed. The State of Arizona did not want to lose its revenues and was willing to compromise in its own material interest (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Critical Race Theory maintains that interest convergence creates disadvantages for people of color unless Whites believe the nondiscriminatory treatment will (a) benefit them or (b) unify Whites during difficult economic times against minorities (Bell, 1992). As an illustration, in Bell’s (1992) *The Space Traders*, he describes an invasion of space aliens who offer to solve the planet’s needs in exchange for all African Americans. Initially, the White population is against such a trade. However, they were willing to exchange the lives of the African Americans for their own economic, educational, and social needs. The point Bell (1990, 1992) makes is that historically White Americans have been willing to sacrifice the well being of people of color for their economic self-interest. Continued subordination is sustained by those economic and legal structures that promote White privilege (Taylor, 1998). Interest convergence benefits Whites in

many ways and hurts people of color. The principle of interest convergence is that the interests of people of color will be accommodated only when they benefit Whites (Bell, 1980, 1990; Delgado & Stefancic, 1991, 2001; Lynn & Parker, 2006).

Theme Three: Historical Analysis

Critical Race Theory insists in grounding itself in a historic context (Bowman, 2001; Taylor, 2009a). Critical Race Theory holds that race and races are products of social thought and do not correspond to biological or genetic reality, but rather are categories that society invents (Espinoza & Harris, 1997; Bernal, 2002). Earlier periods in which racial inequalities were clear (Matsuda et al., 1993) reveal an ignorance of a racist history in the U.S. political, legal, and educational system (Taylor, 2009a). The Constitution and the courts have and continue to be the gatekeepers. Thus, conversations about historically keeping Whites and students of color separate and providing unequal education have been avoided. According to Taylor (2009a), there exists a tendency when discussing race to disregard the historic conflict in which “it was spawned” (p. 7). This releases society from the complexities of historical and political problems such as the academic achievement gap between White students and students of color.

Theme Four: Storytelling

Critical Race Theory is grounded in race and gendered histories and their legacy in pursuit of social justice in both educational research and practice (Bernal, 2002; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). One way to draw attention to histories of racism is by examining the disparities in both the stories of people of color and those of the majority (Taylor, 2009a). Storytelling urges people of color to recount their experiences with racism and the legal system and to apply their own perspectives (Delgado & Stefancic,

2001; Parker & Lynn, 2002). For instance, educational institutions marginalize people of color (hooks, 1994). Often this is justified through research that dismisses the voices (Caruthers, Thompson & Eubanks, 2004; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) of Mexican Americans through majoritarian storytelling. Thus, Solórzano and Yosso (2002) pose a question “Whose stories are privileged in educational contexts and whose stories are distorted and silenced?” (p. 36). Thus, CRT allows students of color to respond to how they experience the U.S. educational system.

Stories told by the under-represented are often sarcastic or humorous. These stories often demonstrate the ridiculous, self-serving, and cruel aspects of humanity. Stories invite the reader to enter into the mental state of a storyteller whose view is different. They offer insight into individuals’ lives “lived at the margins of society” (Delgado & Stefancic, 1991, p. 321). Critical Race Theory’s storytelling provides a way to share counterstories of lived experiences. In doing so, the counterstories contribute to the literature, so readers view the lived experiences of racism from a different lens (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Fernandez, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Williams, 1990). For instance, according to Solórzano and Yosso (2001), counterstories serve four theoretical and methodological functions:

- (a) they can build community among those at the margins of society by putting a human and familiar face on educational theory and practice; (b) they can challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society’s center by providing a context to understand and transform established belief systems; (c) they can open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society by showing the possibilities beyond the lives of the hearers, showing that they are not alone in

their position; and (d) they can teach others that by combining elements from both the story and current reality, one can construct another world that is richer than either the story or the reality alone. (p. 475)

Critical Race Theory recognizes that marginalized groups, by virtue of their status, tell stories that are different from stories of the dominant group. Moreover, stories are an essential means for survival and emancipation. In addition, stories disclose things the reader should know. The stories suppressed and devalued by the dominant group show the strengths of storytelling and thereby constitute the counterstory. Storytelling is critical to understanding and teaching others about racial discrimination (Delgado, 1989, 1990; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Rolon-Dow, 2005; Solórzano, 1998).

People of color are urged to write their experiences about race and racism using first person accounts that enable them to share their unique perspectives. Instead of being ignored or silenced, CRT advocates for brown voices. In this way, people of color may better communicate with Whites things that White individuals are unlikely to know (Delgado, 1990; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The dominant group should be interested in listening to stories from people of color because it is only in this way that Whites can “acquire the ability to see the world through others’ eyes” (Delgado, 1989, p. 2439). Such stories allow others to see the world of people of color through a distinctive lens (Delgado, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Espin, 1997). It is through this process that ethnocentrism may be conquered. These stories are mutually beneficial because they “enable the hearer and teller to build a better world, which neither could make on their own” (Delgado, 1989, p. 2439). With greater understanding of the other’s perspective, both parties can work toward creating a more

just society. Voiceless individuals look at it as “a step forward in the long journey toward substantive equality” (Harris, 1990a; Matsuda, 1987, p. 397). Critical Race Theory privileges the voices of individuals who are burdened with inequalities and who rely on storytelling as a way to be represented (Duncan, 2005; Rolon-Dow, 2005).

Theme Five: Interdisciplinary and Eclectic

Critical Race Theory is interdisciplinary and eclectic. It borrows from “liberalism, law and society, feminism, Marxism, poststructuralism, critical legal theory, pragmatism, and nationalism” (Matsuda et al., 1993, p. 6). Eclecticism allows CRT as the means to examine either methodology or theory to advance the cause for racial justice. In addition, it maintains that education should place racism in a historical and current perspective using interdisciplinary methods (Matsuda et al., 1993; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano et al., 2005).

Theme Six: Elimination of Oppression

The overall commitment of CRT is for social justice that struggles to end “all forms of racial, gender, language, generation status, and class subordination” (Solórzano et al., 2005, p. 275). In addition, abolishing discrimination in the United States is part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression. Progress is measured through the social transformation that requires political policies, which address the oppression of an individual’s experience (Matsuda et al., 1993; Solórzano, 1998). For instance, in her research, Quiroz (2001) wrote about a female student of color who stated: “I want to be a zoologist. I like animals. But I have one science course. My counselor told me I didn’t need any more science. Instead I took typing to graduate” (p. 343).

Intersectionality

The term intersectionality was coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw to address the fact that the lived experiences of women of color shape their multiple experiences (Bedolla, 2007; Crenshaw, 1989; Davis, 2008; Ludvig, 2006; Nash, 2008). According to Crenshaw (1991), there are three ways of conceptualizing intersectionality: (a) structural, (b) political, and (c) representational. Structural intersectionality is based on the notion that White women who do not share the same race and class are limited in helping women of color, who because of their race and class, face different obstacles.

Political intersectionality suggests that women of color are situated within at least two subordinated groups because women of color experience racism in ways that men of color or White women do not always confront. For instance, men of color experience racism differently than women of color and the experiences of women of color do not parallel those of White women (Bedolla, 2007; hooks, 1984; Vera & de los Santos, 2005).

Representational intersectionality contends the concerns of women of color fall between a void. Consequently, women of color “exist . . . within the overlapping margins of race and gender discourse and in the empty spaces between” (Crenshaw, 1992, p. 403; Lanehart, 2009; Nash, 2008). In other words, the concerns of women of color fall into an abyss between women’s issues and racism.

Intersectionality is significant when explaining individual “differences among women” and their experiences (Davis, 2008, p. 70; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, 2005; Harris, 1990a). Women of color stress the connection between race and gender. Thus, this “intersecting, complementary nature” (hooks, 1984, p. 52) to be Mexican American

and female deemphasizes the “single-axis” framework and the importance of one struggle taking priority over the other (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1224; Nash, 2008; Simoniello, 1981). Consequently, ignoring intersectionality risks leaving individuals at those intersections dissatisfied. Critical Race Theory argues that doing so does injustice to individuals who have multiple consciousnesses, who experience the world in different ways due to intersectionality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, 2005; Espino, Muñoz, & Kiyama, 2010; King, 1988; Simoniello, 1981).

Although race and racism are at the center of Critical Race Theory, it considers intersections of other forms of subordination such as socioeconomic status and gender. Yet, as Barnes (1990) notes, “Critical race scholars know that class oppression alone cannot account for racial oppression” (p. 1868). In the United States, it is impossible to understand fully the significance of gender without appreciating the way gender intersects with race and class (Crenshaw, 1989; Guinier & Torres, 2002; Solorzano, 1998).

During the 1980s, the debate was common to theorize the relationship among gender, race, class, and sexuality. This debate is not part of the research literature nor is sexuality or class. The notion of monolithic “women’s experiences,” independent of race and gender, reduces women’s experiences to either race or gender (Harris, 1990b, p. 588). Race or gender do not identify primarily a Mexican American female. The experiences of Mexican American women cannot be divided into race and gender (Grillo & Wildman, 2000; Simoniello, 1981; King 1988). Only in the United States do White individuals have the comfort of imagining that gender and race are separate experiences. Thus, the experiences of Mexican American women are perceived as “different,” and

disregarded, or treated as a deviation from the White norm (Cuadrez, 2005; Harris, 1990b). Gender and race intersect in complex ways so the experiences of White women will differ from those of Mexican American women. Consequently, racist stereotypes combine with gender discrimination to create a unique set of issues for Mexican American women because the “intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Harris, 1990a; Simoniello, 1981).

Simoniello (1981) investigated the intersectionality of race and gender of Mexican American females. The findings were that these Mexican American women placed a high value on education, family relationships, and had high expectations of themselves. In terms of perceived racism in school due to being Mexican American and female, all the younger women (63% of the total group) recalled incidents of discrimination. However, the older (45+) women (of the groups), did not perceive any discrimination. According to Matsuda et al., (1993), too often victims of racism often find themselves without words to articulate what they experience. Critical Race Theory gives a name to the injury. Thus, when victims of racism discover a name, they soon find they are not alone in their racial subordination.

Critical Race Theory in Education

Educators in public education need a “coherent theory of race” to construct their understanding and practice of racial inequalities (Rolon-Dow, 2005; Taylor, 2009a, p. 9). Such an agenda is crucial toward a movement of social justice and equity (Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002). The challenge facing educators as they begin to discover race and racism is that educators become uncomfortable acknowledging students’ differences.

This veil of colorblindness is what King (1991) called dyconscious racism, “an uncritical habit of mind that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as a given” (p. 135).

By 2042, minorities in the United States are projected to become the majority. According to the U.S. Census Bureau News (2008), by July 1, 2050, Latino/as will represent 24% of the U.S. population, making Latino/as the nation’s largest ethnic group. In addition, Latino/as over the age of 18 years will make up 30% of the workforce, a 15% increase from today’s number of 46.7 million (Bazar, 2008; U.S. Census Bureau News, 2008). Between 1993 and 2003, Latino/a students enrolled in elementary and secondary school increased from 12.7% to 19% of the total student population. In 2005, one in five students eight and under was Latino/a (Fry & Gonzales, 2008; Gandara, 2010; Garcia & Jensen, 2007; Kohler & Lazarin, 2007; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Tate (1997) suggested CRT as a field of analysis in educational research, stating:

Both educational research and law have often characterized “raced” people as intellectually inferior and raised doubts about the benefit of equitable social investment in education and other services. This paradigmatic kinship built on conceptions of inferiority suggests the need for a theory that explicates the role of race in education and law. (p. 202)

This type of cultural deficit thinking demonstrates the negligible impact educational research has had on the role of race and gender in education (Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2006; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Simoniello, 1981; Tate, 1997). Consequently, the White male, middle class American is the standard against which other groups are compared (Valdivia, 2002). Instruments designed to measure differences are

applied generally across all groups, with perhaps minor adjustments for culturally diverse populations. Factors such as social class, gender, cultural orientation, and English proficiency are considered irrelevant in education by predominantly White, middle class educators (Ferri & Connor, 2005; Tate, 1997, p. 199).

Critical Race Theory's relevance to educational problems, according to Lynn and Parker (2006), is based on four factors: (a) the link between the work done by both Critical Legal Scholars and education scholars concerned with racism in education, (b) explaining the role of CRT as a scholarship designed by people of color for people of color, (c) using CRT to add to other research on race in connection with education and inequalities, and (d) continuing to conduct research to expand knowledge and relevance to those oppressed (pp. 269-270).

Educational research often has focused on the low academic achievement of Latino students (Barajas & Ronnkvist, 2007; Fernandez, 2002; Jones & Fuller, 2003). For instance, concern at the federal and state level has led policymakers to label their low performance as a "crisis of Latino/a education" (Fernandez, 2002, p. 47). However, research rarely includes students' perspectives on their education or acknowledges how students of color cope with educational experiences (Fernandez, 2002). Critical Race Theory exposes school practices in which race and racism affect the educational lives of students attending K-12, public schools in the United States. Through counterstorytelling, CRT tackles the issue of oppression facing students of color in education by giving Latino/as the opportunity to let their voices define themselves and their worth (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Fernandez, 2002; Freire, 2008; Gilligan, 1982; Parker & Lynn, 2002). Moreover, CRT places race and racism at the forefront and

allows Latino/as, through the power of their told stories, to challenge the status quo (Delgado, 1989, 1993b; Montoya, 1994).

Race

According to Carter and Goodwin (1994), a person's race is perceived as their racial identity. Thus, the assumption is that racial identity is the same as an individual's race without consideration of within-group differences (Espin, 1997; Espinoza-Herold, 2003; Haney-Lopez, 2000b; Valdes, 1997; Valencia, 2006). Therefore, the term race should not be included under culture or diversity; it needs to be addressed directly through history's concept of race, which determined who does and does not benefit from an education in the United States (Anderson, 2007; Watkins, 2001).

Racial divisions constructed hundreds of years ago are entrenched deeply in American society. Race is defined by color, physical characteristics, and language to classify individuals as White, African American, Hispanic American, American Indian, or Asian American (Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Crenshaw, 1998; Haney-Lopez, 2000b; Kozol, 1991; Watkins, 2001). Carter and Goodwin (1994) noted the classification of race assumptions or stereotypes about individuals is a way to determine an individual's place within society. Historically, laws enforced boundaries for African Americans, American Indians, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans. Today, these boundaries are maintained by tradition and custom (Anderson, 2007; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Spina, 2006). In the qualitative research literature review done by Carter and Goodwin (1994), three social paradigms defining social interactions and educational policies were examined: (a) inferiority, (b) cultural deprivation, and (c) cultural differences.

Of the three paradigms, inferiority is the oldest (Carter & Goodwin, 1994). The inferiority paradigm is grounded in the assumption that due to physical characteristics, people of color are biologically and genetically inferior to Whites. This idea began in the U.S. during colonial times when the status of inferiority for American Indians, African Americans, and Mexican Americans was accepted socially. Education was seen as liberating; thus, education was denied to non-Whites to maintain the status quo (Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Watkins, 2001).

Cultural deprivation resulted in a shift from the 1950s and 1960s inferiority to the deficit or cultural deprivation paradigm. The cultural deprivations paradigm added a sociological meaning of race to its biological meaning to create a criterion whereby visible racial members are compared to White norms to demonstrate ways in which they are deviant. Therefore, the differences are presumed to be explanations for behavior and low academic performance. According to Carter and Goodwin (1994) these “low-caste members have been viewed as products of deficit cultures needing to acculturate to the ‘American’ way to achieve” (p. 302).

Carter and Goodwin (1994) describe the early work of anthropologists who classified race according to skin color, hair texture, and lip thickness. The most intense study involved the size of the cranium in relationship to intelligence. Carter and Goodwin (1994) comment that Professor S. Morton concluded the differences “gave our own race a decided and unquestionable superiority over all the nations of the earth” (p. 295). Consequently, differences among Whites and non-Whites have led to the ingrained and dyconscious belief that non-White students are genetically inferior due to their race.

Zarate, Bhimji, and Reese (2005) agree with Carter and Goodwin's (1994) study that scholars have sought to find a relationship between racial identity and low academic achievement. In their study, Zarate et al. (2005) sought to dispel the belief that identities and achievement are correlated (Hurtado, Gonzales, & Vega, 1996; Lopez & Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Vigil, 1997). According to Zarate et al. (2005), most research has relied on surveys, without considering why students responded the way they did. As a result, scholars relied on personal label identifications to interpret the significance of students' self-identification.

Developmental theorist, Baxter Magolda (2004), states that knowledge is the core of personal epistemology. The beliefs about self, learning, classroom instruction, and domain specific beliefs are all part of personal epistemology. Moreover, individuals actively make meaning of their experiences using their current perspectives to draw conclusions about what the experience means to them. The constructed meaning is dependent on their current assumptions about self and the world around them. Thus, personal epistemology is intertwined with identity and relationships.

In a 15 year longitudinal investigation, Latino/a, Hispanic, Mexican American, Mexican American, White, Chicana/o, Salvadoran, and Guatemalan students were asked to select labels to describe themselves. Students born in the United States always selected an additional label. For instance, a student who self-identified as Chicano also would choose Latino or Mexican American. When asked why not American, the response was "I am not American . . . I don't always represent American," "I feel more Mexican American than American," or "I don't know, I just don't consider myself American" (Zarate et al., 2005, p. 102). The authors did not rule out the notion that students

rejecting a bicultural identity was a result of their marginal status experienced in school due to low academic achievement. Several students explicitly mentioned racism or discrimination for rejecting the American label.

Zarate et al.'s (2005) study revealed an unexpected result between students' academic performance and identity: math and reading standardized testing and post-high school plans correlated to students' strong sense of identity. During interviews, students often referred to their roots, background, and cultural heritage as a rationale for selecting their ethnic label. The research findings of both Carter and Goodwin (1994) and Zarate et al. (2005) agree: Mexican American self-identity of race should not be included under culture or diversity. Race needs to be confronted directly because it is a critical factor, which does and does not benefit from socioeconomic status and education.

Vaught's (2008) ethnographic study concurs with the research of Zarate, Bhimji, and Reese (2005) and Carter and Goodwin's (1994) of education equating low academic achievement to race, i.e., in viewing students of color as academically and culturally inferior when compared to their White peers. Comments made by White educators revealed their narcissistic attitude towards students of color whom they perceive in need of "white teachers to help them [students of color] learn to think logically," otherwise "they [students of color] just don't have the ability to do well in school" (p. 566). Vaught (2008) contends the beliefs and actions of the White educators are illustrative of racism in the larger cultural context of education.

Culture

In the 1960s, class differences and caste structure in the United States began to concern educators. This encouraged research studying the problems of the poor in search

of remedies for their predicament. The terms “disadvantaged,” “deprived,” and “underprivileged” emerged as terms referring to minority groups (Orstein, 1982, p. 197). This movement led to the cultural deprivation paradigm, which attributes differences between Whites and racial/ethnic groups to presumed cultural differences. Carter and Goodwin (1994) inferred that these differences are the underlying explanation for behavior and school performance, i.e., school failure. Thus, researchers and policymakers who support this paradigm maintain cultural differences are responsible for educational attainment among all races. In 1996, even the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare agreed cultural differences were responsible for underachievement. As a result, in another shift of focus, multicultural educators introduced a new term—cultural difference. This new paradigm endorses focusing on cultural differences among students (Carter & Goodwin, 1994).

One of the tenets of cultural differences is the idea that culture affects students’ education (Carter & Goodwin, 1994). Explanations for academic underachievement continue to include culture, economic status, and genetic inferiority (Anthrop-Gonzalez, Velez, & Garrett, 2005; Fernandez, 2002). As a consequence, culture today has taken on another aspect, “cultural deficit discourse,” which “blame[s] the victim” for their academic failure (Lee & Burkam, 2003; Sarcho & Martinez-Hancock, 2007, p. 44; Spina, 2006). Therefore, at risk and disadvantaged continue to be justifications for labeling students as academic failures (Alva & de los Reyes, 1999; Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Lee & Burkham, 2003; Steele, 2009; Vang, 2005).

Simoniello’s (1981) research dispels the notion of cultural deficit, which tends to support the cultural stereotype of a passive Mexican American woman. The achievements

of the Mexican American women in the study were not different than many other Mexican American women, however, they recognized their determination extended beyond their homes and families, yet did not exclude them. They wanted both a career and family, and each woman attained her goal in her own way. A professional Mexican American said of her culture, “My parents brought with them a high value for education, learning for the sake of learning, education” (p. 124). As individuals mature, they become more skilled at interpreting their personal experiences in life, moving from simple to complex ways of making meaning. In addition, they also are able to evaluate a question and come to a personal decision (Baxter Magolda, 2004). Thus, in a culture where emphasis is placed on family, the women felt the need to excel both at home and in their profession. One woman referred to it as “a question of duality of roles” (Simoniello, 1981, p. 134).

Language

The use of Spanish often is seen as synonymous with all Latinos. In the study done by Zarate et al. (2005), Mexican American students’ language played a role in how they saw themselves as well as how others perceived them. Thus, language was part of the reason how students explained identity. For instance, one student described Latinos as, “people from Mexico, Central, and South America. I guess they speak Spanish” (Zarate, 2005 et al., p. 104). A female who self-identified as Chicana, simply put it as “a Mexican American that was fortunate enough to learn the language [English] and able to excel in a different country, a more Americanized Mexican American” (Zarate et al., 2005, p. 104).

According to Zarate's et al. (2005) study, language emerged as a strong variable used to explain or reject certain ethnic label choices. Consequently, the Spanish language played a large role in Latino students self-identifying themselves, as described by one participant, "people from Mexico, Central and South America . . . speak Spanish" (p. 104). Therefore, language was used to explain the selection of the term as either American or Latino.

Gender

According to the work of Gilligan (1982), voice implies having the ability to construct, articulate, and give meaning to one's personal realities. Thus, voice for the sake of speech is not synonymous with empowerment nor is language synonymous with voice (Harris, 1990a). Rather, language is the tool through which voice is expressed. Therefore, for voice to empower, it must not only be spoken, it also must be heard. For instance, anger, resentment, and self-recrimination may be heard in the voices of Puerto Rican and Mexican American students in their journals (Quiroz, 2001).

Teachers in high school don't care about us. I think they do not like us. They never answer questions and they make you feel stupid for asking. They never offer to help you after class. After a while, you just stop asking.

They [teachers] ignore students. They treat us Hispanics different than they treat white people. They would rather deal with white people and one teacher, he will just tell it to you. It makes me so mad but what can we do? (Quiroz, 2001, p. 332)

Valian (2005) contends that gender is socially constructed and every individual assumes the responsibility of managing acceptable gender identities. Valian (2005) explains that individuals are seen either as male or female (Barlett, 1990; Ong, 2005).

Thus, by the age of six or seven “gender constancy,” membership in a male or female group, is achieved (Tatum, 1997, p. 43). According to Valian (2005), once gender schemas are in place they work to the disadvantage of women by distorting perceptions, e.g., males are taller than females. Women are stereotyped as nurturing, docile, frail, incompetent, and dependent on men as protectors (Ong, 2005). On the other hand, men are stereotyped as independent, task-oriented, and instrumental (Goffman, 1977). In sum, men act, and women feel and express feelings (Valian, 2005). Gender schemas function mostly below the level of awareness. As such, many individuals espouse meritocratic beliefs and perceive themselves as acting within those beliefs, but the schemas make it difficult for individuals to see anything wrong with their practices. The next section addresses how treating all women the same has several dangers. The section is divided into: (a) Mexican American and woman, (b) invisibility of Mexican American women, and (c) roles of Mexican American women.

Mexican American and Woman

Socially accepted norms have defined gender roles. The prototype of a woman is White, middle-class, and European (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Hancock, 2007; Lanehart, 2009; Ludvig, 2006; Welter, 1966). The prototype of an ethnic minority is a Black heterosexual male (Crenshaw, 1989; Espin, 1997; Guiner & Torres, 2002; hooks, 1994; McCall, 2005; Smith & Anderson, 2005). Thus, the notion of gender has a tendency to unify all women’s experiences independent of race, class, sexual orientation, and other realities for women of color. The result is that some voices are silenced or “voices have been ignored” (Harris, 1990a; Montañó & Burstein, 2006; Nash, 2008, p. 3; Williams, 1989). Furthermore, a general category of women is “exclusionary” because it

treats all women's experiences as White and privileged (Barlett, 1990, p. 847; Guzman & Valdivia, 2004; hooks, 1981; King, 1988; Ludvig, 2006; Perkins, 1983). For instance, when White women identify their oppression, it corresponds to their experience as White women. However, race changes how women experience gender, not simply as one more form of oppression, but "race is a different basis for oppression that entails different kinds of subordination" (Barlett, 1990, p. 848). According to Amott and Matthaei (2001), Barlett (1990), Delgado and Stefancic (2001), and Harris (1990a), gender is not isolated from, but falls within the context of multiple realities for people of color. For instance, Cotera (1977) notes that Japanese American women were in internment camps not because they were women but because they were *Japanese* American women. King (1988) explains it another way, "Not only because they are women, but because they are colored women" (p. 42).

In a review of research by Simoniello (1981), Ong (2005), and Ruiz (1998), Mexican American women were "within the shadows of history" (Ruiz, 1998, p. 34). In the study findings by Ong (2005), women of colors' self perception of invisibility and intellectual inferiority were associated with ethnic stereotypes. For example, a Chicana graduate student recalled:

You know, "Vlad got an A and they'll [Whites] say, "Well, yeah, he's Russian." They may not say, "You're dumb!" right back in your face . . . Well, they think Russians are smart. What do they think about Mexican Americans? And how is that affecting how they treat *me*? (Ong, 2005, p. 603)

Another Chicana, referring to herself stated, "it's just frustrating for them [Whites] to always have low expectations of you" (Ong, 2005, p. 603). According to Ong

(2005), these experiences indicate the students feel they are being judged against prevailing societal stereotypes, which question their academic competence: “blacks and women have inferior intellect; Mexican Americans are lazy” (p. 603). Consequently, Mexican American women assume the burden “of responding to standards not traditionally designed for them” Star (1991) (cited in Ong, 2005, p. 598).

Invisibility of Mexican American Women

At the turn of the nineteenth century (1820-1860), the *Cult of True Womanhood* (Perkins, 1983; Welter, 1966) emerged. Women were judged by their attributes, by their husband, neighbors, and society. The attributes included piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. In other words, according to Welter (1966), a true woman was a “mother, daughter, sister, wife—woman” (p. 152). American society saw women as “The American Girl” (Welter, 1966, p. 157). She understood her place to be one of weakness, timidity, and inferiority in need of male protection. Thus, the American woman was White and middle class. By the end of the century, she was termed a lady (Guzman & Valdivia, 2004; Perkins, 1983, p. 283).

Some of the earliest historical references to Mexican American women in what is now the United States were noted in 1773. Mexican American women were recruited by Spaniards to come to Alta, California to settle and populate the area. Between 1800 and 1821 new invaders, Europeans, began arriving in California. During this time, there were limited literature references to Mexican American women by lawyers, bankers, and other prominent White men who came after the Mexican American War. The small amount of literature between the 1820s and 1940s about Mexican American women reflects the

ascribed racial and cultural inferiority of Mexican American women (Casteñeda, 1990, 1997; Ruiz, 1998).

With the conclusion of the U.S. — Mexican War and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexican American women became second-class citizens. Almost immediately they became an inferior “other” (Elenes, 1997, p. 359; Ruiz, 1998, 2009). Thus, historians such as Bancroft (1888), Hittell (1897), and Eldredge (1915) (cited in Casteñeda, 1990) based their stereotypic negative images of Mexican American women using third person information, institutional records, pamphlets, newsletters, and other documents to write about the Mexican American women (Ruiz, 1998, 2009). For instance, a Mexican “expert” from Vanderbilt University, Dr. R. Garis testified before a U.S. congressional committee what he heard from a third-party:

Their [Mexican American] minds run to nothing higher than animal functions — eat, sleep, and sexual debauchery. In every huddle of Mexican shacks one meets the same idleness . . . filthy children with faces plastered with flies, diseases, lice . . . apathetic peons and lazy squaws. (Ruiz, 1998, p. 28)

As a consequence, the Mexican American woman was stereotyped by historians and other nineteenth and twentieth century writers (Casteñada, 1990, 1997; Cuadraz, 2005; Ruiz, 1998). The unquestioned belief, according to the research of Casteñeda (1990, 1997), was one of Nordic racial superiority whose civilization was superior.

Consequently, based on these accounts, individuals applied White, middle class norms of proper behavior to Mexican American women and judged them. The ethnocentric perceptions of this period suggested that society should be judged by a standard, but for Mexican American women, the standard by which historians judged them was the

Victorian True Woman, who represented “an unmarked category against which difference is constructed” the supposed most advanced form of a civilized society (Ignatiev & Garvey, 1996 cited in Owen, 2007, p. 210; Perkins, 1983; Welter, 1966). As a consequence, Mexican American women in the 1960s were America’s “forgotten minority, yet to be recognized (Cuadraz, 2005, p. 218; Elenes, 1989; Ruiz, 1998). In the 1970s, poetry such as *Notes of a Chicana Co-Ed* (Zamora, 1977 cited in Cuadraz, 2005) were voiced individually. Although scholarship has begun to focus on gender, the concept of gender continues to focus on the White middle class female and ignores Mexican American women (Belenky et al., 1986; Casteñeda, 1990; Gilligan, 1982; King, 1988; Ong, 2005; Simoniello, 1981; Valian, 1998). Research devoted to Mexican American women continues to “lack . . . representation” (Espino et al., 2010, p. 804). Thus, “Mexican women [continue] within the shadows of history” (Ruiz, 1998, p. 34). It is Mexican American women who experienced racism and “speak with a special voice to which we should listen” (Matsuda, 1987, p. 324).

Roles of Mexican American Women

In the studies by National Women’s Law Center and Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (2009), Casteñeda (1990, 1997), Jones and Fuller (2003), Lee and Burkham (2003), and Ong (2005) describe the role of a Mexican American woman as meek and passive, fulfilling her responsibilities of taking care of younger siblings in their large families to preserve traditional patterns among Mexican American women. This custom traces back to Aztec culture (Segura, 1999), which led to the perception among Whites that all Mexican American women are resigned to their passive role of caregiver. According to Jones and Fuller (2003) and Morales (1978), this type of

thinking leads to stereotypes like passive and meek. However, in stereotyping Mexican American women into a submissive role following fatalistic philosophy, Whites become convinced that while they strive to manage and overcome adversity, Mexican American women simply accept their situation as fate. In Simoniello's (1981) study, Mexican American females perceived their status limitations as females. Mexican American women perceived their brother[s], whether younger or older, as enjoying more freedoms and privileges. As one Mexican American woman recalled, the only trip her family ever took, her brother went while she stayed behind, because "he was a boy" (Simoniello, 1981, p. 128).

Educational Inequalities

Educational scholars have sought to identify the relationship among race, gender, class, and low academic achievement with mixed results (Hurtado et al., 1996; Jones & Fuller, 2003; Lopez & Stranton-Salazar, 2001; Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Vigil, 1997; Zarate et al., 2005). McCarthy (1993) calls this type of combination of race, gender, and class "additive" models, which fails to capture the multiplicity of histories and "realities" present in public education (p. 329). Therefore, rather than focusing how women, poor people, and people of color can take full advantage of a quality education, research focuses on barriers. Thus, education continues to be a site to reproduce racial meaning and racial identities (Espinoza-Herold, 2003; Vaught, 2008). The research of McCarthy (1993), Spring (2001), and Watkins (2001) reveals the genealogy of the inequities of education in the U.S.:

1. Early in American history the colonial or plantation period, America's educational laws prohibited education for African Americans.

2. Theorists such as Morton (1839) and de Gobineau (1915) promoted theories linking cranium size estimates or biology theories to intelligence. In addition, Eysenck and Kamin (1981), and Jensen (1969, 1981, 1993) theorized a link between race and intelligence (cited in McCarthy, 1993).
3. Jim Crow laws were enacted into educational policies in both the North and South. This led to the segregation of students of color forcing them to attend schools that lacked adequate resources and qualified teachers, if they had any schools at all.
4. Curriculum theories labeled African Americans as “underachievers” and African American families and communities as “defective” and dysfunctional” (McCarthy, 1993, p. 332).
5. Liberal and progressive programs such as HeadStart, compensatory education, and multicultural programs began focusing on closing the achievement gap between Whites and students of color.

Secada (1989) and Vaught’s (2008) research argues that education has failed to educate women, minorities, and the impoverished. Secada (1989) cites the historical trend of documented disparities between men and woman, socioeconomic classes, and between Whites and Asian Americans, African Americans, American Indians, and Hispanic Americans. The high drop out rate of African American, American Indian, and Hispanic students, as well as those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, suggests academic inequalities based on social economic status, race, and language barriers. In the studies by Lee and Burkham (2003), National Women’s Law Center and Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (2009), and Vaught (2008), it was revealed that

schools create hostile environments where students are reminded daily of their academic failure; thus, school may negatively affect students beyond their behavior and background. Lee and Burkham (2003) created two categories. The first was social risk, which included demographic factors such as race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, parents' education, and family structure. The second category was labeled academic risk, which included student behavior and performance. The results indicated school may exert a negative effect for students. For instance, a White high school educator suggested that students of color are "lazy, rude, and out of control" to explain why she becomes incensed to the point of yelling at the students (Vaught, 2008, p. 569). Consequently, expressing such comments as, "they [students of color] just don't have the ability to do well in school" equates to less than 60% of Latinas earning a high school diploma in 2006 (Vaught, 2008, p. 566).

Solórzano, Villalpando, and Oseguera (2005) put graduation rates in perspective. They examined educational graduation rates among Latino/as beginning in elementary school. The study revealed that out of 100 Latino/as, just over half, would graduate from high school, and only about 10 would complete a bachelor's degree. Eventually, fewer than one, or 0.4 of the original 100 students, would complete a doctoral degree. Latinos represent the largest ethnic/racial group in the United States, but have the poorest educational attainment rates among all groups.

Stereotypes

Claude M. Steele (2009) coined the term "stereotype threat" in 1995. His assumption was that stereotype threat has an effect on school achievement by preventing or breaking an individual's identification in school where the stereotype occurs (Gandara,

2010; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Viadero, 2007). The initial study involved African American students; however, the study has been cited in over 200 other studies. According to Viadero (2007), the stereotypes of most concern are those for African Americans, Latinos, and girls.

In a study by Jones and Fuller (2003), ten stereotypes of Hispanic students emerged in pre-service teachers. The stereotypes are, in order of greatest frequency: (1) poor, (2) lazy, (3) uneducated, (4) hard working, (5) manual laborers, (6) illegal immigrants and stupid, (7) family oriented and involved with gangs, (8) beautiful artists, drunks, trouble makers, moochers, and religious, (9) drug dealers and dirty, (10) irresponsible, hot tempered, low riders, rude, excelling in society, high drop outs, anti-conformists, overweight, and dark skinned.

A high school counselor for at-risk students felt the “female role [of Latinas] is staying home and not going to college and having a career. Staying home and having a family is first and foremost” (NWLC & MALDEF, 2009, p. 17). Carla, a high school student, recalled the stereotypes of her teachers. For instance, she failed because she did not know English. In her physical education class, the only students failing the course were Mexican Americans. In addition, she remembers being called a “wetback” and told the migra [immigration] was coming for her. Eventually Carla dropped out of high school (Espinoza-Herold, 2003). Other female students of color who stay in school have to endure their White educators who call them “animals” (Vaught, 2008, p. 571). School and media undermine Latinas’ opportunities by reinforcing stereotypes borrowed from the larger racial power structures (Espinoza-Herold, 2003; Gandara, 2010; NWLC & MALDEF, 2009; Vaught, 2008).

Tracking

The U.S. educational system provides an assurance of success for anyone who “works hard” to meet the academic standards, yet as many authors and researchers attest (e.g., Darder, Torres, & Gutierrez, 1997; Espin, 1997; Espinoza-Herold, 2003; hooks, 1984; Lindsey et al., 2003; Oakes, 1990; Oakes & Saunders, 2008), the U.S. system is designed to replicate class. A high school diploma is a dream deferred for many Mexican American students (The National Council of Women’s Organizations, 2009; National Women’s Law Center and Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, 2009; Orfied & Lee, 2007; Solórzano et al., 2005). As a result, African Americans, Mexican Americans, and American Indians have been and continue to be in traditional positions of involuntary subordination through slavery, conquest, or colonization (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999).

Oakes and Saunders (2008), *Harvard Law Review* (1989), and Kozol (1991) note that since the 1920s, schools have grouped African American and Hispanic students from low socioeconomic status together in low ability groups. These tracking practices have racial, ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic class bias (Carbonaro & Gamoran, 2002). Yet, tracking is central to educational stratification and inequality. In an earlier work, Oakes (1990) comments that some educators contended opportunity, achievement, and participation were due to intelligence; i.e., educators believed some groups of students (due to their race or low socioeconomic status) did not have the mental capacity to be academically successful. According to the *Harvard Law Review* (1989), the first intelligence test was designed to identify “children whose poor performance indicated a need for special education” (p. 1322). The IQ test, like its predecessors, which measured

skulls and facial characteristics, found that Whites were more intelligent but did not consider cultural differences or testing bias. Others, according to Oakes (1990), saw tracking as regrettable, but a necessary consequence in attempting to obtain the highest return on education. Accordingly, tracking is associated with race, socioeconomic status, and the neighborhoods where poor minority students live.

Many individuals in society see the relationship between a student's race and socioeconomic status as distressing, but not a matter for school concern (*Harvard Law Review*, 1989; Kozol, 1991; Oakes, 1990; Oakes & Saunders, 2008). As a consequence, many Latino/a students are tracked into lower levels in grade school and on into secondary school (Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Kozol, 1991; NWLC & MALDEF, 2009; Oakes, 1990). For instance, the research done by the National Women's Law Center and Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (2009) reported Latinas are steered frequently into career and technical education programs, which prepare them for occupations such as cosmetology and child care. For example, Mexican American students selected cosmetology as their number one career aspiration. Even those who are successful feel the diminished expectations. A successful high school graduate now in college explained it this way, "I . . . went through high school knowing I wasn't having the same experience as my peers (they were tracked, left to linger without getting any real support for improvement)" (NWLC & MALDEF, 2009, p. 21). In the study by Quiroz (2001), Latino students repeatedly wrote about their embarrassing and confusing high school experiences of being tracked.

A historical perspective of education reveals the reproduction of hegemonic racial identity and racial inequalities (Crenshaw, 1998; McCarthy, 1993; Spina, 2006).

Therefore, the questions “how does racial difference operate in education?” (McCarthy, 1993, p. 333) and “how can we achieve more equity in education?” beg for an answer (Kozol, 1991, p. 175).

Navigating Skills

Historically, Mexican Americans have a long record of low academic success. Carter and Goodwin (1994), Quiroz (2001), and Alva and de los Reyes’ (1999) studies have sought to explain this phenomenon by focusing on risk factors such as poverty, culture, language, and race. However, Alva (1991), Alva and de los Reyes (1999), Plummer and Slane (1996), Harrell (2000), and Murray, Brown, Broddy, Cutrona, and Simons (2001) note empirical literature has not addressed fully the issue of race and stress. According to Plummer and Slane (1996) and Harrel (2000), Lazarus and Folkman (1984) were the first to address the importance of culture within which coping occurs. The psychological definition of racism related to stress by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) is “The race-related transactions between individuals or groups and their environment that emerge from the dynamics of racism, and that are perceived to tax or exceed existing individual and collective resources or threaten well-being” (cited in Harrell, 2000, p. 44).

The findings of Alva and de los Reyes (1999) and Quiroz (2001) indicated that Hispanics who self-identified high levels of stress also reported low academic grades and perceived themselves as incompetent. In addition, their findings indicated Hispanic students did not know how to cope fully or create meaning from their negative experiences in school. As a consequence, according to Quiroz (2001) and Espinoza-Herold (2003), only the most resilient students stay in school and graduate. The studies suggest that it is not education Latino students reject, but the experience of being a

minority. Identifying resilience was the focus of Gonzalez and Padilla's (1997) research, which predicted a supportive academic environment and a sense of belonging were significant predictors of resilience for Mexican American students. The analysis revealed that a sense of belonging in school was the only significant predictor of student grades. Thus, Mexican American students who have a sense of belonging in school will initiate the process of self-empowerment, which contributes directly to academic success.

Skills for maneuvering through educational institutions not created for people of color are necessary in racially hostile environments. According to Alva (1991), students need the ability to "sustain high levels of achievement, despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly at school, and ultimately, dropping out of school" (p. 19). Therefore, people of color must rely on using numerous navigational skills to maneuver through educational settings permeated by racism (Fernandez, 2002; Yosso, 2005).

Table 2.1 summarizes the literature reviewed, which focuses on factors that impact Mexican American women such as: race, gender, and education in the context of public education in the United States.

Table 2.1 Summary of Pertinent Literature for Race, Gender, and Education

Study	Data	Method of Study	Findings
Race			
Carter & Goodwin (1994)	Review of qualitative literature	Qualitative studies	Introduction of psychological dimensions associated with race, which may be used to understand, enhance, and improve academic

Study	Data	Method of Study	Findings
			achievement
Lee & Burkam (2003)	3,840 students in 190 urban and suburban high schools	Quantitative studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys 	School, through its structure and organization, influences students to either stay or drop out of school
McCarthy (1993)	Review of qualitative literature	Qualitative studies	Race and gender are treated identically. Thus, Asians, Hispanics, and African Americans are discussed as groups with unique characteristics, different from Whites
Secada (1989)	Review of qualitative literature	Qualitative studies	Education has failed to educate women, minorities, and the poor, creating a society of underclass
Vaught (2008)	1 White female teacher	Qualitative study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnography 	Examination of high school White educators who continue to systematically oppress students of color
Watkins (2001)	Review of literature (data artifacts and articles)	Mixed method studies	White supremacy in governing education for Black students. Situating Black education within the political context

Study	Data	Method of Study	Findings
Zarate, Bhimji, & Reese (2005)	121 Spanish speaking parents and children from 13 kindergarten classrooms	Qualitative study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15-year longitudinal investigation 	Examination of ethnic identities and academic achievement of Latino/a students
Gender: White Women			
Baxter Magolda (2004)	101 White 18-34 year old students attending liberal arts college	Qualitative study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews 	Knowing self is central to construction of knowledge and development
Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule (1986)	135 White females	Qualitative study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews 	Women's firsthand experiences need to be listened to
Gilligan (1982)	Three studies Sample of 144 White males and females.	Qualitative study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews 	The silence of women is beginning to be heard
Lewis (1995)	Review of qualitative literature	Qualitative studies	Omission of women and Blacks in the American Constitution
Valian (1998)	Review of qualitative literature	Qualitative studies	Gender schemas prevent women from advancing professionally
Valian (1999)	Survey of business men and women	Quantitative study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey 	Advancement for women is slow and gender schemas operate covertly
Valian (2005)	Review of quantitative literature	Quantitative studies	Gender schemas guide perceptions and are covert, placing women at a disadvantage
Welter (1966)	Population selected was White, middle class women	Quantitative study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey 	Real women often felt they were not living

Study	Data	Method of Study	Findings
			up to being a True Victorian woman
Gender: Latina/ Mexican American/Hispanic Women			
Barlett (1990)	Review of qualitative literature	Qualitative studies	Engage with others in a critical transformative process for further understanding
Casteñeda (1990)	Review of qualitative literature	Qualitative studies	Spanish-Mexican American women are devalued racially, culturally, and sexually
Casteñeda (1997)	Review of qualitative literature	Qualitative studies	Beginning of what is meant in the construction of Mexican American women's identity
Espinoza-Herold (2003)	One Latina	Qualitative study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethnography 	Student failure of Latinas in high school is due to imposition of dominant White, middle class values

Study	Data	Method of Study	Findings
Jones & Fuller (2003)	Mexican /Hispanic American Parents Mexican/Hispanic American students pre-service teachers	Mixed methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Surveys 	Develop educational methods of connecting to and understanding Hispanic students
Ong (2005)	36 undergraduates	Qualitative study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longitudinal • Ethnographic • Interviews 	Minority women expend time navigating system rather than exerting self academically
Simoniello (1981)	Eight Mexican American women	Qualitative study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews 	Discrimination based on the intersection of race and gender
Ruiz (1998)	Mexican women	Qualitative study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Archives • Oral history collection 	Mexican women in U.S. stories' of their struggle to find their place in America
Gender and Race: Black Women			
Collins (1986)	Review of qualitative literature	Qualitative studies	As “outsider within” Black women have used their marginalized status to write their point of view about self, family, and society to produce distinctive analyses of race, class, and gender
Perkins (1983)	Review of qualitative literature	Qualitative studies	Historically Black women have been compared to White, middle

Study	Data	Method of Study	Findings
			class and educated woman
Education			
Alva & de los Reyes (1999)	171 ninth-grade Hispanic students in public high school	Quantitative study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire 	Psychological stress, language, family, and academic achievement among Hispanic adolescents are correlated
Gonzalez & Padilla (1997)	2,169 Mexican American high school students	Quantitative study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire 	Supportive academic environment and sense of belonging has effect on academic achievement
<i>Harvard Law Review</i> (1989)	Review of qualitative and quantitative literature	Qualitative studies	Tracking perpetuates social class and racial inequalities
Kozol (1991)	Educational staff and students in both public and private schools through the U.S.	Qualitative study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews 	African American and Hispanic students from low SES families often were grouped in low ability classes
Oakes (1990)	Teachers and students at various public schools	Mixed methods study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistical documents • Interviews 	African American and Hispanic low SES students often are clustered into “low ability” classes
Oakes & Saunders (2008)	Review of qualitative literature	Qualitative studies	Adding “special” programs is more palatable

Study	Data	Method of Study	Findings
			than uniting with diverse interest groups
Quiroz (2001)	Journals of 27 Puerto Rican and Mexican American students written in eighth grade and eleventh grade	Qualitative study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student narratives 	Though Latino/a students speak their voices still are silenced
National Women's Law Center and Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund (2009)	1,000 student surveys 21 student interview 15 staff interviews 4 student focus groups	Mixed methods study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys • Interviews • Focus Groups 	Despite barriers, Latinas have a strong desire to succeed
Solórzano, Villalpando & Oseguera (2005)	Review of qualitative literature	Qualitative studies	Persistent educational inequalities for all Latinos
Steele (2009)	African American and female students in college at various locations	Mixed methods study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre- and post-tests • Controlled groups for race and high school GPA 	Stereotype threat can depress academic performance for African Americans and females

Summary

Valian (2005) demonstrates people are seen as either male or female, and once in place, gender schemas work to the disadvantage of women. The research of Gilligan (1982) and Belenky et al. (1986) suggested women's voices need to be heard and validated, but was based on White, middle class, college-educated females. Baxter Magolda's (2004) research also focused on White college-educated females, adding the personal epistemology of individuals is intertwined with identity and relationships. According to Quiroz (2001), education often controls who may and who may not speak

in validating the voices of students of color. Education historically has held the belief that White students should be separated from “others” (Collins, 1986; *Harvard Law Review*, 1989; Huber et al., 2006; Taylor, 2009a, b; Watkins, 2001). The underlying thought is that races differ intellectually (*Harvard Law Review*, 1989; Lee & Burkham, 2003; Oakes, 1990; Oakes & Saunders, 2009; Ong, 2005; Yosso, 2005). Consequently, studies have sought to find a relationship between low academic achievement and racial identity (Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Vaught, 2008; Zarate, Bhimji, & Reese, 2005).

Critical Race Theory challenges the belief that White, middle class females are the standard by which Mexican American women must be judged (Casteñeda, 1990; hooks, 1994; Huber et al., 2006; Solórzano, 1998). This shift in research through Critical Race Theory leads to appreciation of the wealth Mexican American women possess, yet has been acknowledged rarely. Storytelling and counterstorytelling allow Mexican American women to give their unique voice to their lived experiences by challenging stories told by those in power and whose stories are viewed as the “natural part of the discourse” (Duncan, 2005; Ruiz, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 475). Listening and hearing stories enable the listener and narrator to share a story, which will enrich the lives of both. In addition, this process may overcome racism and force the reader to view the world in more than one way (Delgado, 1989, 1990).

Education has failed Mexican American women by ignoring race and gender as well as their diverse backgrounds and experiences (NWLC & MALDEF, 2009; Ruiz, 1998). Mexican American women, therefore, must learn to navigate in a system that devalues and rejects their culture (Bonilla-Santiago, 1999; Freire, 2008; Holling & Rodriguez, 2006; Matsuda, 1991; Yosso, 2005). Racism has hindered Mexican

American women's aspirations and their opportunities for advancement, compelling them to design their own path. Mexican American women learn to wrestle with and navigate through attacks of racial injustices experienced in school (Matsuda et al., 1993; Montano & Burstein, 2006; Ruiz, 1999; Solórzano et al., 2005; Yosso, 2005). Secada (1989) noted education has failed to educate women and minorities. To restate, "One cannot help but question the powerful role the school plays" (Quiroz, 2001, p. 342). To ignore Mexican American women "is to turn our backs on the American promise of fairness and equality of opportunity" (Robbins, Ammerman, & Rodriguez, 2009, p. 1).

This literature review shows there is a shift in the research from a deficit model to one that values Mexican American women for who they are (Correa, 2010; Cuadraz, 2005; Espino et al., 2010; Guzman & Valdivia, 2004; Ruiz, 1998; Russel y Rodriguez, 2008; Vera & de los Santos, 2005). Thus, Critical Race Theory scholars are attempting to sing a "new scholarly song" (Bell, 1992, p. 144). Because women (and all people) of color experience racism on a daily basis, this study contributes to the limited literature on Mexican American women in two important ways: (a) the experiences of Mexican American women are not compared to those of the White college-educated female, and (b) the intersectionality of race and gender experienced by Mexican American women (double jeopardy) is examined (Belenky et al., 1986; Correa, 2010, p. 425; Crenshaw, 1991; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, 2005; Espino et al., 2010; Espinoza-Herold, 2003; Gilligan, 1982; Guzman & Valdivia, 2004; Lynn & Parker, 2006; Matsuda et al., 1993; NWLC & MALDEF, 2009; Simoniello, 1981; Vera & de los Santos, 2005).

CHAPTER 3 - Methodology

Introduction

This qualitative multiple participant case study research was designed to investigate the intersection of race and gender as experienced by five female Mexican American doctoral students. Critical Race Theory (CRT) was the theoretical framework used for analyzing and interpreting the data. The qualitative research design increased the rigor of the case study. Moreover, “human behavior, unlike that of physical objects, cannot be understood without reference to the meaning and purposes” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 106).

Central to CRT are narratives, which constitute storytelling, or counterstory, to allow individuals to name their own reality (Delgado, 1989, 1990; Delgado & Stefancic, 1991, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Through this qualitative multiple participant case study, the researcher delved into the lived experiences of Mexican American females as they told their stories; stories “told by people of color” are different from the ones frequently heard in the dominant discourse (Lopez, 2003, p. 84). These stories merit telling because they expose things about the world that we should know from people whose voices often are silenced (Anzaldua, 1987; Cammarota & Romero, 2006; Delgado, 1990; Fernandez, 2002; Freire, 2008; Gotanda, 1991; Harris, 1990a; Quiroz, 2001). The participants for this case study are enrolled in the doctoral program at Midwestern University.

Chapter 3 is organized in the following manner: (a) overview of qualitative research design, (b) purpose of the research, (c) research questions, (d) research design of

the study and rationale, (e) pilot study and protocol development, (f) selection of participants, (g) research site, (h) role of the researcher in qualitative research (i) data collection, (j) trustworthiness of the data, (k) data analysis, and (l) summary.

Overview of Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research is the umbrella term under which a variety of research methods that use data language are clustered. In the broad sense, qualitative research is “any kind of research that produced findings not arrived by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Creswell, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17). The diverse qualitative approaches seek to answer different kinds of research questions and use different analytic tools (Malterud, 2001; Polkinghorne, 2005). The kind of data and manner in which it is collected varies according to the design (Polkinghorne, 2005). Creswell (2007) proposed that the multiple methods be organized under five different traditions, each with their own unique design: (a) narrative, (b) phenomenology, (c) grounded theory, (d) ethnography, and (d) case study.

Narrative research incorporates many forms such as autobiography, life stories, personal stories, and biographies. Phenomenology has several approaches, such as hermeneutical phenomenology, and psychological phenomenology. Strauss and Corbin (1990) (cited in Creswell, 2007) have dominated grounded theory, and Charmaz (2005) (cited in Creswell, 2007), has further advanced grounded theory. Ethnography has advanced from description and an objective, realist orientation to the open ideological production of culture. Regardless of the approach, all qualitative researchers tend to follow the basic process, e.g., introduction, questions, methods of data collection, and analysis (Creswell, 2007).

The area to be researched determines the inquiry methods. The lives of people are the areas qualitative methods are designed to study. Qualitative inquiry deals with human experiences from which people make sense. According to Polkinghorne (2005), “A primary purpose of qualitative research is to describe and clarify experience as it is lived and constituted in awareness” (p. 138). Qualitative research seeks depth and attempts to learn the subtle nuances of life experiences (Golafshani, 2003). Therefore, the data gathered for studying experiences need to be first-person or self-identified by the participant’s own experience (Polkinghorne, 2005). Thus, research produces findings from real-world settings where the “phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally” (Patton, 2001, p. 39).

The ability for qualitative data to describe fully a phenomenon is an important consideration not only from the researcher’s perspective, but from the reader’s as well (Hoepfl, 1997). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), “If you want people to understand better than they otherwise might, provide them information in the form in which they usually experience it” (p. 120). Qualitative data reports thick detail and insights into the participants’ lived experiences (Stevenson, 2004).

Features of Qualitative Research

Several scholars (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990; Eisner, 1991: as cited in Hoepfl, 1997) identify the foremost characteristics of qualitative research:

1. Qualitative research uses the natural setting as the source of data. The researcher attempts to observe, describe, and interpret settings as they are maintaining what Patton (1990) calls an “empathic neutrality” (p. 55).

2. The researcher acts as the “human instrument” of the data collection.
3. Qualitative researchers predominantly use inductive data analysis.
4. Qualitative research reports are descriptive, incorporating expressive language and the “presence of voice in the text” (Eisner, 1991, p. 36).
5. Qualitative research has an interpretive character aimed at discovering the meaning events have for the individuals who experience them, and the interpretations of those meanings by the researcher.
6. Qualitative researchers pay attention to the idiosyncratic as well as the pervasive, seeking the uniqueness of each case.
7. Qualitative research has an emergent (as opposed to predetermined) design, and researchers focus on this emerging process as well as the outcomes or product of the research.
8. Qualitative research is judged using special criteria for trustworthiness (Hoepfl, 1997, p. 49).

The design of qualitative research depends on the purpose of the inquiry. There is no criteria for sample size (Hoepfl, 1997; Patton, 1990). Judgments about usefulness and credibility are left to the researcher (Hoepfl, 1997). Thus, Creswell (2007) suggests the researcher select an approach to inquiry and data collection that is sensitive to the people under study, and data analysis that establishes patterns or themes.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research was to explore the potential race and gender discrimination Mexican American females experienced in their public high school educations. Mexican American females seeking an education encounter not one issue

(race), but a second (gender), because of social stereotyping in the American educational system that is founded on race and gender inequities (Crenshaw, 1988; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Thus, this multiple participant case study explored how Mexican American females navigated racial and gender obstacles (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, Solorzano & Bernal, 2001; Yosso, 2005). This study focused on the lived realities of five Mexican American females who graduated from different public Midwestern K-12 public high schools and currently attend Midwestern University as doctoral students. Critical Race Theory is the theoretical framework used for analyzing and interpreting the data.

Research Questions

This qualitative multiple participant case study investigated the intersectionality of five Mexican American female participants in their public high schools as both women (gender) and Mexican (race). The research questions are:

1. In retrospect, what were these Mexican American women's perceptions of racism experienced while attending high school (Bell, 1992; Collins, 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001)?
2. What racial obstacles did these Mexican American women experience in high school (Alva, 1991; Collins 2000; Yosso, 2005)?
3. What compelled these Mexican American women to complete high school and continue on to higher education despite racial obstacles (Bonilla-Santiago, 1999; Delgado, 1989; Solórzano et al., 2005)?

Research Design of the Study and Rationale

The first procedure a researcher must consider is to determine what kind of approach is appropriate to the research problem. For this research, a case study approach was appropriate because it has identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an understanding of the cases. Next, the researcher needs to identify the case or cases. The case may be single or multi-case (Creswell, 2007). The following addresses: (a) case study, (b) characteristics, and (c) truth.

Case Study

Case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one, single-case design, or more cases, multiple-case design. However, each individual case must be rigorously conducted (Yin, 1981a). Case study research is an approach whereby the researcher explores a bounded system (case), or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed data collection, involving multiple sources, e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, documents, and reports (Creswell, 2007). Given the multiple sources, data collection must be guided by the topic studied to alert the researcher to relevant data collection, e.g., participants, documents to be analyzed, observations, etc. This helps ensure that a similar procedure is carried out from one case to another (Yin, 1981a).

Characteristics

The characteristics of case studies are: “(a) a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when (b) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 1981b, p. 59). Thus, the strength of the case study is its

ability to cover both a contemporary phenomenon and its context (Patton, 2001). Case studies may be single or multiple case studies. Case studies do not need to have a minimum number of cases, rather the researcher works with the situation that presents itself in each case (Creswell, 2007; Tellis, 1997; Yin, 1981a, 1994). Five important components for designing case studies and research are: “(a) the study’s questions, (b) the proposition, if any, (c) its unit(s) of analysis, (d), the logic links the data to the propositions, and (f) the criteria interpret the findings of the research” (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 1994, p. 20).

The multiple case studies’ questions, as suggested by Yin (1994) and Smith-Maddox and Solorzano (2002), were driven by “how” and “why” questions. Thus, the first task of the researcher was to define the questions. The study was driven from the “how” and “why” questions, which were useful in focusing on the study’s goals. Second, according to Yin (1994), a study has a stated purpose for evaluation. The purpose for this research was to explore the intersection of race and gender for Mexican American females in public high school. The units of analyses were five Mexican American females attending Midwestern University. Finally, the data was linked to propositions and criteria for interpreting the findings (Tellis, 1997).

Case studies have been used increasingly in education to develop critical thinking and to broaden the reader’s horizons (Tellis, 1997). Stevenson (2004) identifies three categories of case studies, each making a different assumption about what the reader can learn. In no particular order, they are (a) positivistic/post-positivistic, (b) interpretive/naturalistic, and (c) critical emancipatory.

1. Positivistic/post-positivistic data are gathered from empirical propositions and validated by scientific methods, to include replication or generalization across multiple case studies.
2. Interpretive case studies are concerned with making sense of how the participants perceive their experiences. Thus, interpretive case studies enable information to be revealed about a specific context as well as the intentions of what is to be accomplished e.g., educational program or activity.
3. Critical theory–based research, like Critical Race Theory (CRT), seeks to understand or explain social reality and transform it. The goal is to change the political and economic structure that oppresses and marginalizes individuals because of race, class, and/or gender. This transformation takes place by analyzing society, leading to a heightened consciousness and to addressing the inequalities and injustices of society (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 2002; Stevenson, 2004, p. 45).

This research uses CRT to analyze and interpret the counterstories shared by the participants. As a theoretical framework, CRT provided a way to expand the examination of race. In addition, case studies from a CRT perspective provide a way to listen to individuals whose voices often have gone unheard (Delgado, 1990, 1995; Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT seeks to expose racism that oppresses people of color due to their race, class, and gender as does this research—in the context of Mexican American females' high school experiences. CRT and the multiple participant case study design, to include storytelling, revealed the participants' realities as shaped by their culture, race, and gender over time.

Truth

The standpoint from which a researcher begins is shaped by how truth is viewed. The truth from one standpoint may become rhetoric when viewed from another standpoint (Delgado, 1993b; Fernandez, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1998). For instance, feminist and ethnic studies research have found taken-for-granted truths rendered women and minority groups' actions (experiences) invisible (Charmaz, 2004; Prins, 2007). This study seeks the truth of Mexican American females, through storytelling, and to expose the other-truths-often taken for granted in literature. Storytelling as a means of telling one's own experiences has a long tradition in education ranging from passing traditional knowledge from generation to generation to every day matters of survival (Stevenson, 2004). In addition, stories can enrich experiences and provide access to other stories beyond those often told (Delgado, 1990). CRT scholars believe people of color can name their "own reality" through storytelling and counterstorytelling (Delgado, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 10; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Matsuda, 1987). Thus, CRT encourages people of color to tell their stories, which challenge the stories told by traditional research.

The multiple participant case study data ultimately were analyzed and coded via the relevant tenets of CRT:

1. Racism is prevalent and endemic
2. Colorblindness
3. Social justice
4. Navigating the system

As data were analyzed and coded, the researcher was alerted for themes that emerged beyond the CRT tenets and devised coding strategies for them.

Pilot Study and Protocol Development

A pilot study was done at Midwestern University and included the following participant characteristics: (a) Latina, (b) public high school graduate, and (c) undergraduate student in third year of college.

To test the research design, a pilot study was done with two undergraduate Latinas who attend Midwestern University. The pilot study tested for clarity and understanding of the interview questions by the participants. The participants' responses were used to make needed modifications to the research questions used for the actual study. The participants were interviewed using an open-ended interview. The interview questions were based on participants' perceived racism experienced in public high school. During the interview, an audiotape was used to record responses. The responses on the audiotape then were transcribed and used for data analysis.

The researcher knew one of the undergraduate students personally and approached her about the study. The participant agreed and volunteered another friend, who had attended the same high school and was in the same college. The second participant first was approached via electronic mail and then met with the researcher at a convenient location to discuss the pilot study. The second participant agreed to the study after it was explained.

A copy of the interview questions was mailed to each participant. Interviews were scheduled at the convenience of each participant. A meeting day, time, and location

for individual participants' interviews were scheduled. The interview day and time was confirmed via email a day prior to meeting.

The day of the interview, in order to gain the consent from each participant, the following were addressed:

1. The purpose of the research
2. The procedures of the research
3. The risks, if any, and benefits of research
4. The voluntary decision to withdraw from the research at any time
5. The procedures used to identify and protect confidentiality (Groenewald, 2004, p. 10).

Once the consent form was reviewed, both researcher and participant signed two copies, one for the researcher and another for the participant. The participant was given another copy of the interview questions for reference during the interview. The researcher placed the audiotape to the left side of the participant, turned on the audiotape, and the interview began. The interview questions were followed sequentially. The initial interview was two hours in length for each participant. No other interviews followed.

Information gathered from the interviews provided the researcher with significant insights into the participants' lived experiences of racism. In analyzing the data, the pilot study revealed several areas that needed adjustment and some changes that needed to be made in the interview process. First, the researcher asked the research questions immediately. Participants appeared to be at a loss when questions were asked right away. As a consequence, background information was not gathered. Second, during the

interview, participants were not prompted or encouraged to elaborate. Third, participants were never asked to self-identify themselves.

After conducting the pilot study, modifications were made to the interview questions and protocol. Some of the modifications included:

1. Asking background questions (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982) about the participant and her family. This allowed participants to relax and reduce anxiety. The questions provided a natural bridge to the research questions dealing with personal experiences of racism.
2. The following questions were changed to help the researcher in probing further participants' experiences with the intersection of race and gender in their public high schools.
 - a. "What is your feeling about the high school you attended?" and "Tell me how helpful were your teachers?" to "Please describe any obstacles that made it difficult for you while in school."
 - b. "What were your feelings towards your previous teachers in high school?" to "Did you face the same challenges as other females in your high school, both Mexican American and European-American?"
 - c. "What cultural obstacle(s) did you have to overcome to stay in high school?" to "What compelled you to persist and prevail over challenges while in high school to continue with your education?"
3. To encourage participants to elaborate when the response was "no," prompts were included:
 - a. "If no, have you observed or experienced racism?"

- b. “If not, how were your experiences different?”
- 4. Participants were asked to self-report their race.

Both participants were high school graduates from schools with over 2,000 students. Currently, they both attend Midwestern University where they are third year college students majoring in science. Participants are bilingual in English and Spanish. However, neither speaks Spanish on campus except to their parents. One participant is the youngest in her family and first to attend post-secondary education. The second participant is also the youngest; however, she had a sibling who had just graduated from a large university. Both participants are from two parent homes and conveyed they are very close to their parents and siblings, visiting as often as they are able.

Selection of the Participants

For this study, the researcher sought to investigate the intersection of race and gender as experienced by Mexican American females while attending public high school. The research sought to determine the role of racism in their public high school and what influenced them to stay in school and graduate. Since the researcher sought to investigate racism in high school, participants were selected who already graduated high school and were attending college in order to obtain their insight firsthand.

Because the goal of qualitative research is to enrich the understanding of an experience, selection was based on those who exemplified the experience researched. Therefore, the participant selections were not random or by chance. Thus, purposive selection of participants allowed the researcher to bring “refinement and clarity to understanding an experience” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 140). Patton (1990) recommends selecting “*information-rich cases* for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those

from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term *purposive sampling*” (p. 169).

In addition, the multiple participant case study was bounded and used criterion sampling; participants were selected to meet a predetermined criterion (Polkinghorne, 2005). The study was bounded by time (12 months) and place (a single university campus) (Creswell, 1998). Criterion sampling, according to Creswell (2007) and Polkinghorne (2005), works well when individuals who are being studied have experienced the same phenomena. Participant selection criteria were based on homogeneous sampling, a subgroup whose experiences are likely to be the same (Polkinghorn, 2005): (a) public high school graduates of United States, (b) Mexican American females, and (c) doctoral students.

For this multiple case study, five potential participants (Creswell, 2007) were approached via electronic mail with an invitation to meet with the researcher. The researcher thought these women could provide an important perspective to clarify the experience being investigated (Polkinghorne, 2005). A meeting time was scheduled and the study was explained, particularly regarding how the study would contribute to the limited literature on Mexican American females. As per protocol (see Appendix A), participants were sent interview questions (see Appendix B), and the IRB #5122 Approval from the Compliance Office (see Appendix C) for their review. To conduct a productive interview, Creswell (1998), Eisner (1998), Shank (2002), and Silverman (1993) all suggest identifying questions in advance because the research questions, “provide the scaffolding for the investigation” (Anfara, Brown, & Magione, 2002). All participants agreed to participate in the study.

Research Site

The research site was Midwestern University. The colleges at Midwestern University include Arts and Sciences; Engineering; Business Administration; Education; Agriculture; Human Ecology; Architecture; Planning and Design; Technology and Aviation. Its graduate programs include 65 masters programs, 45 doctoral programs, and 22 graduate certificates in multiple disciplines. Undergraduate majors number over 250.

The student population is over 23,000 students, coming from all 50 states, as well as over 90 different countries. As of Fall 2010, 11,925 males and 11,663 females were enrolled. Women received 1,735 of all undergraduate degrees. By ethnicity/race, 1,812 were non-resident alien, African Americans numbered 993, American Indians 113, Asians 320, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 35, Hispanics 1,077, Multiracial 408, Whites 18,687, and unknown 143. The graduate school has 2,093 women enrolled. By ethnicity/race, non-resident aliens numbered 350, African American 93, American Indian 13, Asian 47, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander 4, Hispanic 67, Multi-racial 21, White, 1,482, and unknown 16. The number of degrees conferred to females in the College of Education in 2010 were: 253 undergraduate degrees, 115 master degrees, and 18 Ph.D.s/Ed.D.s . The number of Hispanic females who obtained a Ph.D./Ed.D. in the College of Education in 2010 was one (Midwestern University of Planning and Analysis, 2010).

The researcher met with participants at a location convenient for them. Three participants were met in their personal office located on the campus of Midwestern University. The participants, who all had children, had their office surrounded by family photos. The fourth participant, single without children, wanted to meet in the

researcher's office. Nevertheless, she brought her reflection journal with her to share during the interview. The fifth participant, divorced with children, requested to meet at a local café. However, she brought with her photographs to share during the interview. The interview was conducted in a booth away from other patrons.

Role of the Researcher in Qualitative Research

The researcher in qualitative research is “the instrument” for data collection (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton 2001, p. 14). Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify the characteristics that make the researcher the instrument. First, humans are able to interact with the situation; they have the ability to collect data at multiple levels; they are able to perceive situations as a whole; they are able to process data immediately; they can provide immediate feedback and request verification of data; and they can explore atypical and unexpected responses from participants. However, because of the nature of this study, this researcher walked a fine line, attempting to be both involved and objective. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006) recommend that researchers must minimize the effects of their personal biases. Accordingly, for this research, assumptions or biases were disclosed because the researcher needed to understand and acknowledge how biases affected the researcher's perspective (Creswell, 2007; Gay et al., 2006; Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Malterud, 2001). Second, the researcher established rapport to help ensure honesty with participants to conduct the research (Gaglio, Nelson, & King, 2006). Third, the issue of ethics was addressed. The researcher accomplished this by respecting the participants' rights, including the right to be informed about the study, to voluntarily accept or refuse to participate in the study, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. In addition, the use of pseudonyms was used to protect the identity of the participants.

Moreover, participants were told how the data would be published. Thus, the researcher had participants do member checking to approve the use of quotations in the study. Furthermore, the voices of the participants were acknowledged through their stories (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). Finally, the position of the researcher while conducting the research was addressed and expanded for clarity.

Researcher Assumptions and Bias

A researcher always enters into research with certain preconceptions: prestudy beliefs, motivation, and interests. For instance, a researcher's background may affect the chosen area of study (Malterud, 2001). Thus, it has become a tradition in qualitative research to reveal the researcher's assumptions and biases to "self and others" (Morrow, 2005, p. 254). For this research, the researcher was interested in Mexican American females because she is a Mexican American female. The researcher's bias (Shenton, 2004) is that Mexican American females are not reflected adequately in past and current research literature. The second bias was that Mexican American females experience a unique type of racism based on the intersection of race and gender. However, the researcher refrained from confounding intuitive knowledge with the data obtained. Therefore, interviews were audiotaped and transcribed, an observation tool was used, participants kept reflective journals, and photos were collected.

Rapport

The researcher found ways to build relationships and navigate the power structure successfully (Gaglio et al., 2006). Rapport is a way to ensure a balance of power between the researcher and the participants in the study (Gaglio et al., 2006; Marx, 2001;

Shenton, 2004). Developing relationships with the participants allows “good data—thick, rich, description and in-depth, intimate interview” (Harrison, MacGibbon & Morton, 2001, p. 323). For this case study, rapport was not difficult to establish. The researcher was flexible in scheduling, shared with participants what to expect from the research, and expressed appreciation of the participants. Power was not an issue since the researcher and participants were all doctoral students.

Ethics

The data collected for the study was from the personal experiences of participants revealed during their interviews, electronic mail correspondence, and primary documents. Thus, the researcher needed to ensure the data presented the perspectives of the participants because the trustworthiness of the data depends on the integrity and honesty of the researcher. However, the welfare of the participants must be the primary concern (Polkinghorne, 2005). According to Creswell (2007), personal data gathered from the participants may reveal emotional details. Through all the phases of research, the researcher was sensitive to ethical considerations. The researcher was sensitive about not exploiting the participants in the study and not further marginalizing them by treating them with dignity and respecting them. Case study research requires other considerations:

1. The researcher sought participant consent. The participants must enter the study freely and understand the nature of the study.
2. The researcher avoided deception by fully disclosing the purpose of the study.
3. The researcher maintained confidentiality, limiting access to data to the researcher and principal investigator.
4. The researcher protected the anonymity of participants.

5. The researcher made the decision whether (or how) to use information “shared off the record” during an interview (Creswell, 1998, 2007; Gay et al., 2006; Polkinghorne, 2005).

Position of Researcher

An insider’s perspective allows the researcher with the same personal experience of the participants to be fully immersed in the research (Patton, 2001). Moustakas (1995) provides an insider’s perspective, his own, as a type of study that distinguishes and elaborates three primary processes that contribute to the development of a relationship with participants: “Being-In,” “Being-For,” and “Being-With”:

1. Being-In involves immersing oneself in another world: listening deeply and attentively so as to enter into the other person’s experience and perception;
2. Being-For involves taking a stand of support of the other person, being there for the other, and becoming an advocate for the person with reference to his/her frustrations;
3. Being-With involves being present as one’s own person in relation to another person, bringing one’s own knowledge and experience into the relationship (pp. 82-84).

To fully carry out the study, the researcher made use of the insider’s perspective, of being-in, being-for, and being-with, having experienced the participants’ culture. The researcher’s insider status as a member of the Mexican American community enhanced the rapport and willingness of the participants to tell their stories candidly. The participants were forthcoming with their responses.

Data Collection

The purpose of the data in qualitative research is to provide evidence for the experience investigated. The evidence is derived from the experiences participants share (Polkinghorne, 2005). The following is the data collection procedure used by the researcher, which included: (a) protection of human subjects, (b) timeline, (c) interviews, (d) field notes, (e) observational data and visual data, and (f) digital audiotapes, transcribing, and storage.

Protection of Human Subjects

The researcher followed the guidelines set forth by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Midwestern University prior to collecting data. For their protection, participants were ensured anonymity. Each interviewed participant was given a pseudonym to further protect her anonymity. All files including audiotapes and computer travel drive, were stored in a locked cabinet in the doctoral student investigator's office. The materials were available only to the researcher and principal investigator. Electronic data was stored on a stand-alone computer that was password protected and backed up on a travel drive, stored in a locked cabinet.

Timeline

The researcher used a structured timeline in cooperation with the principal investigator. The first step was finding a topic. The researcher is a Mexican American female that was discriminated against in K-12 public education. Moreover, the researcher was also doctoral student. Thus, the researcher sought to investigate (a) Mexican American females, (b) doctoral students, and (c) high school graduates. The

second component included finding a theory. This was not difficult since the researcher studied Critical Race Theory during her graduate coursework. Finally, qualitative research was selected because it allows the voices of the participants to be heard.

The proposal was made to the researcher's committee members February 2009. The committee approved the proposed research with suggestions. Following this, the researcher applied to the IRB for approval to proceed with the study in May 2009. The IRB approved the application August 2009. Following approval, the researcher approached potential participants. Interviews were scheduled starting in August 2009 and continued through November 2009.

During the entire process the researcher met with the principal investigator for peer debriefing sessions on data and timeline progress. Once interviews were transcribed, they were sent to participants for member checking. While participants were member checking, the researcher proceeded with Chapter 1, Chapter 2, and Chapter 3. These were completed fully by May 2010.

Finally, all the raw data was collected on December 2009. It was organized into manageable chunks to proceed with Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 were completed on September 2010. The dissertation was submitted to the principal investigator September 2010.

Interviews

The approach most often used in producing data is interviews with participants. The purpose of the interview was to gain a detailed account from each participant about her experiences related to the intersection of race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989; Polkinghorne, 2005). For this study, semi-structured interviews were the primary form

for data collection from the participants. The questions were detailed and developed in advance to ensure that the same information was obtained from each participant. There was no predetermined response; the researcher probed within the research questions. The interview schedule ensured good use of the limited interview time (Hoepfl, 1997; Patton, 1990; Yin, 1994). During the initial interview, the researcher addressed the following:

1. Reviewed the purpose of the study with the participants
2. The procedure of the research
 - a. Raw data would be transcribed
 - b. Participants would member check their transcript to ensure accuracy of what was shared during interview and to ensure the captured data made sense.
3. Secured permission to ensure that the participants entered the study of their own free will and advised them they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty
4. Anonymity was provided to protect their identity (Groenewald, 2004, p. 10)
5. The participants received a copy of the research questions in advance through electronic mail and a second copy was offered to them at the time of the interview.

According to Belenky et al. (1986), an interview schedule involves: (a) background, (b) self-description, (c) gender, (d) relationships, (e) real life, (f) education, (g) ways of knowing, (h) hypothetical judgments, and (i) conclusion. The aim for the researcher was to gather information from the participants (Polkinghorne, 2005).

The interview format followed the suggestion of Belenky et al. (1986) and Polkinghorne (2005) by beginning with a conversation of give and take with the participant. However, the researcher knew in advance what experiences were being sought from the participants. The schedule began with an introduction by the researcher and an explanation of the study. As suggested by Patton (1990), a tape recorder, which captures data more accurately, was used and placed in an unobtrusive place on the table across from participant.

The first step of the interview, background, gathered information about the participants' demographic background and family. Participants also had the opportunity to share their siblings' educational background as well as their parents' attitude about education. In addition, participants were asked to share what they cared and thought about. The second part of the interview was a self-description. The participants were asked to self describe themselves to themselves. This part also included personal information such as marital status and children, if any. The third part of the interview addressed the research questions, which addressed gender, relationships, real life, education, ways of knowing, and hypothetical judgments.

The first research question asked each participant to reflect on racism she experienced as a Mexican American female. Participants were asked about the extent of racism in their high school and to provide examples. The researcher, to encourage participants to share observed or experienced racism, used probing. Moreover, participants also were asked about the perceived differences in treatment between Mexican Americans females and European-American females and its effect on them. Relationships also were part of this question. Thus, participants were asked if educators

or administrators were aware of the participants' perceived differences in treatment. In addition, probing was used to encourage participants to elaborate on or clarify a response throughout the interview.

The second research question addressed real life obstacles experienced by participants while in high school. This question addressed ways of knowing, i.e., how participants coped with the barriers while in high school. Pursuing this further, participants also were asked if their White female peers faced the same challenges. The researcher continued to probe by asking hypothetical questions of the participants. For instance, if the participant hesitated regarding whether or not the challenges were the same for both Mexican American females and White females, she was asked, "How did you deal with them?" to aid the participants in their response.

The third research question asked participants to share what compelled them to persist and continue their education. This part of the interview obtained the participants' ways of knowing and relationships, which affected their education, personal, and career goals. The question lent itself to participants sharing their intimate feelings about self.

The final part of the interview was the conclusion. The participants were asked if there were any other questions that the interview should have included that would shed light on the study, as women of color experiencing racism in high school. The participants could not think of any other questions. The participants were thanked and reminded that the interview was confidential and the audiotape would be stored in a locked cabinet. They were reminded that they could opt out of the study at any time without repercussion. A second interview was scheduled.

The second interview proceeded much like the first. Participants were greeted and thanked again for contributing to the study. The audiotape recorder was placed on the table in a discreet place so as not to distract the participant. The researcher provided a transcribed summary of the previous interview for participants to member check before proceeding to the follow up questions. Several participants removed parts of the previous interview. The researcher proceeded with the interview. However, the researcher asked other leading questions to obtain information in lieu of what was deleted.

The participants were interviewed twice, one-on-one. The initial interview for four participants was one and one-half hour each. A second interview was scheduled with them. This interview lasted at least one and one-half hour for each. One participant, because of distance and time, was interviewed once for three hours. Through these semi-structured interviews, participants described in-depth their high school experiences with racism.

Observational Data and Visual Data

Observation is the technique of gathering data through direct contact with another human being. During the observation, the researcher watched and documented participants' behavior. Observations were useful to clarify data gathered from the participants during the interviews. One source of observational data, according to Polkinghorne (2005), was the participants' behavior, facial expressions, gestures, bodily tone, clothing, and other nonverbal indications. For this study, an observational checklist was used and completed immediately after the interview in a private place (see Appendix E).

Another source was the visual data. This was the environment in which the interview was conducted. The participant's home or office, the furniture arrangement, displays of photos, books, magazines, and other reading materials served as indicators of the participant's experience. The observations need to be recorded in written form, but often were made immediately after the conclusion of the interview. Documentary evidence can consist of written, oral, visual, or cultural artifacts (Creswell, 2007; Polkinghorne, 2005). Several participants shared photographs of themselves and reflective journals, which provided further triangulation of data.

Digital Audiotape, Transcription, and Storage

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Access to data collected from the interviews was limited to the researcher and the principal investigator. At the conclusion of the study, transcripts, audiotapes, field notes, consent forms, e-mails, photos, and letters of the participants will be destroyed after three years as per IRB policy.

The transcripts, audiotapes, field notes, consent form, electronic mail, photos, and reflection journals were stored in a locked cabinet. In addition, the electronic data was stored on a stand-alone computer that was password protected and backed up on a travel drive, also stored in locked cabinet.

Trustworthiness of the Data

A key issue in qualitative research is trustworthiness (Rubin, 2000). Establishing trustworthiness of the data incorporates both rigor and subjectivity, which is accomplished by accurate analysis and interpretation of collected data (Eisner 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005; Whittemore et al., 2001). Lincoln and Guba's

(1985) evaluation criteria are the “gold standard” used by qualitative researchers (Whittemore et al., 2001, p. 527). To ensure trustworthiness so that unexpected bias does not creep into the study (Anfara et al., 2002; Baxter, & Eyles, 1997), the following criteria are addressed:

1. Credibility
2. Transferability
3. Dependability
4. Confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

Credibility

Credibility is the most important principle for guiding qualitative studies. Credibility refers to internal consistency (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Morrow, 2005). However, credibility depends less on sample size than on the richness of the data gathered (Patton, 1990). Credibility is based on the assumption that there is no single reality but rather there are multiple realities. Therefore, since multiple realities are assumed, there is not a definite manner to distinguish between things like ‘cause’, ‘effects’, and ‘truth’ (Baxter & Eyles, 1997, p. 513).

Yin (1994) notes the importance of appropriate measures for the phenomena being studied. Thus, for this study specific procedures were used. This included questions used to gather data and the method of data analysis used successfully in previous comparable projects such as Belenky et al. (1986) and Critical Race theorists (Shenton, 2004). The procedures used for this research were:

1. *Familiarity with the culture of participating organization.* As suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the researcher spent prolonged engagement with the participants in order to establish a relationship of mutual trust.
2. *Sampling* of individuals to serve as participants. Some ways to select participants include random sampling, convenience, and purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is used most often used in qualitative research. It stresses the search for ‘information-rich cases’ (Baxter & Eyles, 1997, p. 513). Thus, for this multiple case study in which multiple voices were sought to gain greater knowledge of a larger group, purposeful sampling was used. The emphasis was confidence that the informants were typical of members of a broader group (Shenton, 2004). Moreover, credibility was not threatened by low sample size since sample size involved as many experiences as possible (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Patton, 1990).
3. Criterion sampling also was used in the study. Criterion sampling was used in order to have a representative group of the phenomena being investigated (Glaser, 1978; Sandelowski, 1995).
4. *Triangulation* is one of the most powerful techniques for strengthening credibility. Moreover, “triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods. This can mean using several kinds of methods or data” (Patton, 2001, p. 247). Therefore, triangulation is based on convergence of multiple sources that provide similar findings, which strengthens the credibility. The source used most frequently for triangulation are narratives from several different participants. To strengthen credibility for this study, the researcher

used more than two narratives from different participants from the themes that emerged and as they informed the research questions. In addition, photos, electronic mail, reflection journals, and an observation checklist were utilized for the study.

5. *Rapport* ensures honesty by the participants. Each participant approached should be given the opportunity to refuse to participate in the study to ensure the data will be collected only from those who are genuinely willing to take part in the study to offer data honestly and freely. The researcher was able to accomplish this by first, taking time to get to know the participant prior to the interview; second, allowing the participant to select a time and date for interview; finally, let the participant select a private place for the interview (Irwin & Johnson, 2005).

The researcher entered the study where the relationships, levels of trust, and power were not compromised since participants and researcher are all doctoral students. Rapport is a way to balance the power dynamic between the researcher and the participants in the study (Gaglio et al., 2006; Marx, 2001) to develop relationships with participants to “get good data—thick, rich, description and in–depth, intimate interview” (Harrison et al., 2001, p. 323). Rapport was developed before the beginning of the study through personal and electronic communication. Reciprocity is often the method used to develop rapport. This establishes the process of “mutual give and take” (Harrison et al., 2001, p. 325). Thus, the researcher shared with participants the benefits of the study and their contribution to the limited literature currently available on Mexican American

females. In addition, the final transcript was available for member checking with each participant to ensure clarity. The following were strategies used for the study:

1. *Frequent peer debriefing sessions* occurred between the researcher and the principal investigator. The debriefing kept the researcher on track by revealing data and interpretations to the principal investigator in order to point out possible sources of misinterpretations and themes or voices that did not fit into the storyline.
2. *Reflective commentary* allowed the researcher to evaluate the study as it developed. A methodological reflective journal was used to record the researcher's initial impressions of data collection, patterns appearing to emerge in data collected, and theories generated. Ultimately, the reflective commentary dealt with emerging patterns, which addressed the study's results and any discussion based on the researcher's methods.
3. *Member checking*, involved shifting from the researcher to the participant in the study. It consisted of the researcher taking back the raw data, transcripts, to each participant to confirm the credibility of the information. Participants were asked to comment on the accuracy and make any needed changes. The researcher, in turn, incorporated participants' comments into the final narrative (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
4. *Thick description of the phenomenon under scrutiny*. Detailed description was an important element for promoting credibility as it helped to convey the actual situation that was investigated.

5. *Examinations of previous research* to assess the extent to which the study's findings are similar with past studies. According to Shenton (2004), the ability of a researcher to relate findings to an existing body of literature is key for evaluating the research. In this manner, previous studies are invaluable resources. For this study, Critical Race Theory was presented in a similar manner and addressed the issues of: (a) racism is prevalent and endemic, (b) colorblindness, (c) social justice, and (d) navigating the system (Anfara et al., 2002, p. 30; Creswell, 2007; Matusuda et al., 1993, p. 6; Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004, pp. 64-69) (italics original).

It is recommended that at least two of the above strategies be used in any given study (Creswell, 2007). Triangulation of different data sources, detailed and thick description, and member checking are all reasonable procedures to conduct (Creswell, 2007; Whitmore et al., 2001). For this multiple participant case study, ten strategies were used. They included: (a) familiarity with the culture of participants, (b) convenience and purposeful sampling of a group who was representative of a larger group, (c) criterion sample to have a representative group, (d) triangulation included narratives, photos, electronic mail, reflection journals, and an observation checklist, (e) rapport was established with participants through prolonged engagement, (f) frequent peer debriefing between researcher and principal investigator, (g) reflective commentary using a methodological journal, (h) member checking was done by each participant, (i) thick description to convey phenomena being investigated, (j) examination of previous research to which the present study's findings are similar with past studies using Critical Race Theory.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which findings fit into contexts outside the study (Hoefl, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005), that is, elements of the research produced in one context may be transferred to others. Thus, transferability requires providing rich, thick description of the data collected. It is important that sufficient thick description of the phenomena under investigation be provided for the reader to have a proper understanding. In other words, enough detail is provided in the text in order to evoke emotions and feeling for the reader (Shenton, 2004).

Because the research sought to determine the role of racism in high school experienced by Mexican American females, participant selection could not be random or by chance. Thus, criteria were based on convenience and purposeful criterion sampling, a subgroup whose experiences were likely to be the same: (a) public high school graduates of the United States, (b) Mexican American females, and (c) doctoral students. The researcher sought participants and recruited participants on the based criteria. Five potential participants were identified who agreed to participate in the study after it was explained to them.

Next, the researcher used three main sources of qualitative data: (a) interviews, (b) observations, and (c) documents. Interviews produced first-person accounts of the experiences of participants. In addition, observations were used to record the researcher's encounters in the presence of the participant i.e., gestures etc. The researcher collected reflective journals and photographs from the three participants who were willing to share.

The number of interview sessions for four of the five participants was two. The fifth participant, due to availability and distance, met once. The interviews were conducted from August 2009 through November 2009 and lasted three hours for each participant. The time period over which data was collected was immediately after IRB approval in August 2009 and continued through November 2009. Beginning in August 2009, interviews were scheduled with participants; participants were asked to keep reflective journals, and share artifacts. In addition, correspondence occurred through electronic mail with participants. This process of collecting data continued through November 2009.

Dependability

Dependability includes the consistency with which the same constructs may be matched with same phenomena. However, it is concerned mainly with documenting the research systematically (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Morrow, 2004; Patton, 2001). Thus, dependability should be reported in detail to enable a future researcher to repeat the study. The in-depth detail allows the reader to develop a thorough understanding of the methods and their effectiveness (Shenton, 2004). The text should include sections on:

1. *Research design and implementation.* For this research, a qualitative multiple participant case study approach was appropriate. The case study design allowed the researcher to explore a contemporary phenomenon in real-life context. The researcher used Critical Race Theory to analyze and interpret the data collected. The data were analyzed and coded via the relevant tenets of CRT: (a) racism is prevalent and endemic, (b) colorblindness, (c) social justice, and (d) navigating the system.

2. *The operational detail of data collecting.* Data collected was based on providing evidence from the participants' experiences. Three main sources of qualitative data included: (a) interviews, (b) observations, and (c) documents. The purpose of the interviews was to gain detailed accounts from the participants of racism experienced while attending high school. The interviews, which were audio recorded, were scheduled at a convenient time and location for the participants. Second, an observation checklist was utilized to capture participant behaviors. In addition, field notes were used to capture other observations made by the researcher. Finally, the documents or the written sources included electronic correspondence between the researcher and participants during the course of the study.
3. *Reflective appraisal of the project.* The researcher kept a reflective journal to evaluate the study as it developed. A methodological reflective journal was used to record the researcher's impressions of the data collection and patterns emerging (Shenton, 2004, pp. 71-72)(italics original).

The detailed report allows the reader to assess the extent to which proper research practices were followed. This will enable a future researcher to replicate the study with the same methods and same participants. Thus the research design may be viewed as a "prototype model" (Shenton, 2004, p. 71).

Confirmability

Confirmability focused attention on the investigator and the interpretations (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004). It may be defined as, "the degree to which findings are determined by the respondents and conditions of the inquiry and not

by the biases, motivations, interests or perspective of the inquirer” (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). A key criterion for confirmability is the researcher’s admission of personal predispositions and assumptions (Shenton, 2004). Since biases are inevitable, the researcher maintained objectivity through the use of triangulation and participants’ stories to reduce the effect of researcher bias. The researcher also stated her pre-existing biases and assumptions. Triangulation included participants’ stories, observation checklist, artifacts, reflective journals, and electronic mail.

As stated previously, detailed methodological descriptions enable the reader to determine how far the data and constructs emerging from study may be accepted. The audit trail consisted of first the raw data in the form of interviews, audiotaped interviews, observation checklists, field notes, and reflective journal. The researcher reduced the data into manageable parts. This consisted of making folders for each participant with their individual data, i.e., transcripts, consent form, observation checklist, reflective journals, photographs, field notes, and printed correspondence. In addition, electronic files were kept to include the researcher’s reflective journal and methodological log (see Appendix D). The data then was analyzed via initial coding, categories and revised coding, and emerging themes. The researcher analyzed the themes that emerged using CRT (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Hoepfl, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004).

Data Analysis

Critical Race Theory focuses simultaneously on the effects of race and racism and the hegemonic system of White supremacy with its goal of social justice (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004). For this reason, CRT was the theoretical framework for analysis and

interpretation of the data for this research. The core elements of data analysis were addressed by the researcher as recommended by Creswell (1998, 2007) as follows.

Data analysis for this multiple case study involved gaining a general overview of all the information by jotting notes in the margins of the observation check list, field notes, interview, transcripts, notes about photographs, reflective journals, and electronic correspondence between the researcher and participants. In addition, notes were made in the methodological log to reflect the researcher's decisions made throughout the study. At this point, the researcher also obtained feedback via electronic mail from the participants to clarify information and to verify comments made during the interview.

Next the researcher prepared and organized the data into manageable chunks by reducing the data by identifying initial codes. The codes were written on the right margin of the transcripts in a different color for easy identification from the initial codes on the left margin. The researcher then reduced the codes into themes. Noting relationships narrowed categories down by clustering. Once the patterns were identified, the researcher displayed the findings in a table (Creswell, 1998, 2007). Data analysis, according to Creswell (2007), is custom-built and "choreographed" (p. 150). Thus, as recommended by Creswell (2007), the data analysis spiral was used.

Data Analysis Spiral

According to Creswell (2007), the analysis process conforms to a general contour represented by a spiral. Thus, in the data analysis spiral, the researcher begins the process of moving in an analytic circle rather than a fixed linear approach. The researcher enters with data and exits with an account or narrative. However, the researcher touches on several facets of analysis and circles, around and around. The following is the procedure

the data analysis spiral follows: (a) data managing, (b) reading, memoing, (c) describing, classifying, interpreting, and (d) representing, visualizing.

Data Managing

The first loop of the spiral is data management. At this stage the researcher organized the data into file folders and computer files. The researcher began the organization process by placing each individual participant's transcription, observation checklist, photos, and reflection journal in individual folders, labeled by number. In addition, most of the information such as transcripts, electronic photos, and electronic mail was placed on computer files and travel drive; the exception was the observation tool and reflective journal.

Reading, Memoing

Following the organization of the data, the researcher continued analysis to get a sense of the data. The suggestion of Creswell (2007) is to read the transcripts in their entirety several times. This allows the researcher to immerse self and get a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it down into parts. Writing memos in the margins of field notes, transcripts, or under photographs helps with this process. The memos are short phrases, ideas, or key concepts that occur to the reader.

The researcher read each individual transcript three times before writing on the margins of the transcripts. On the margin, short phrases, which came to researcher's mind while reading the transcript the third time, were written. Each transcribed interview was read in isolation before reading another one. After reading all five transcribed interviews, the researcher reflected on the data and formed initial categories on a matrix formed from the words of the participants. Table 3. 1 represents the initial codes from

the data, which were then brought into manageable chunks (Anfara et al., 2002; Creswell, 2007).

Table 3.1 Code Mapping: Initial Codes (to be read from bottom to top) (modified from Anfara et al., 2002, p. 32.)

First Iteration: Initial Codes			
Stereotyping	Tolerated	Segregated	Different
Respect	Behavior	Tracking	Knowing one's place
Ideal student	Resources	Protection	Understood
Perfect student	All knowing teachers	Assimilated	Experiences
Opportunities	Expectations	Discrimination	Support
Underprivileged	Unnatural	Awareness	Mother
Data: 1	Data: 2	Data 3	Data: 4

Describing, Classifying, Interpreting

The third loop consists of describing, classifying, and interpreting. In this loop, formation of codes represents the core of the data analysis. Here the researcher describes in detail developed themes, descriptive detail, classification, or the researcher develops codes or categories. The detail is provided *in situ*, that is, within the context of the setting, person, place, or event.

Description is central to both ethnography and case studies. In qualitative research, researchers develop codes or categories to sort text or visual material into categories. Creswell (2007) notes there are several issues that must be addressed in the coding process. The first is whether or not to count codes, i.e., counting the times the codes appear. While Creswell (2007) himself counts the codes, the number of occurrences is not coded, since it conveys a quantitative orientation and frequency contrary to qualitative research. Moreover, counting suggests all codes are given equal emphasis and disregards the passages coded, which may represent contradictory views.

Another issue is the use of pre-existing or *priori* codes that guide the coding process. Codes range from prefigured categories to emergent. Prefigured codes limit the analysis rather than opening up codes to reflect views of participants in a traditional qualitative manner. If prefigured coding is used, the researcher should be open to emerging codes during analysis.

For this study, the researcher developed codes to sort text material into categories. The initial development included 20 categories of information. The researcher reduced the categories to four themes to use for writing the narrative. To address the first concern of counting the times the codes appear (Creswell, 2007), the researcher counted the codes, but did not report them in the actual study. The second issue, using pre-existing or *priori* codes, which limits the analysis to those codes, was not a concern. Though the six tenets of CRT were used for analysis, the researcher was to open emergent themes. The researcher wrote in the exact words of the participants.

Classifying pertains to taking information apart and looking for categories or themes of information. Classification involves identifying five to seven general themes. The type of information the researcher looks for are stories, individual experiences and the context of those experiences, cultural themes, or detailed description of a case or cases. The data was coded according to features of CRT:

1. Racism is prevalent and epidemic
2. Colorblindness
3. Social Justice
4. Navigating the system (Matsuda, et al., 1993, p. 6; Yosso, 2005).

Representing, Visualizing

In the final phase of the spiral, researchers present the findings of the data in text. The cells contain themes, not numbers. The data was presented in a 4 x 4 table. The grids contain the experiences of the participants while attending public high school, which are discussed in Chapter 4. Table 3.2 includes the final themes of the intersection of race and gender and its features: (a) racism is endemic and pervasive, (b) colorblindness, (c) social justice, and (d) navigating the system. Table 3.3 are qualitative data sources combined and utilized for analysis.

Table 3.2 Themes of Intersection of Race and Gender: (a) racism is endemic and pervasive, (b) colorblindness, (c) social justice, and (d) navigating the system

Racism is Endemic and Pervasive	Colorblindness	Social Justice	Navigating the System
Counselors	Tracking	Empowering all students of color	Maintaining the status quo
Educators	Stereotypes	Advocating for all students of color	Resistance
Peers	Identity	Providing equal opportunities for all students of color	Assimilation into White culture

Table 3.3 Qualitative Data Sources

Trustworthiness	Strategy employed
Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prolonged engagement in field• Frequent peer debriefing• Triangulation<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Reflective Journal○ Narratives○ Observation checklist○ Photographs○ Electronic mail

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member checks • Rapport • Reflective commentary • Thick description
Transferability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thick description • Purposive sample • Convenience sample • Criterion sample • Triangulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interviews ○ Observations and observation checklist ○ Reflective Journals ○ Photographs
Dependability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methodological reflective journal • Data analysis spiral using CRT • Triangulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reflective Journal ○ Interviews ○ Observations and observation checklist ○ Field notes ○ Electronic mail • Peer review
Confirmability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triangulation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Participants' narratives/counterstories ○ Reflective Journal ○ Interviews ○ Observation checklist ○ Photos ○ Electronic mail • Practice reflexivity, i.e., methodological log • Admission of personal predispositions and assumptions

Summary

This research design is a qualitative multiple participant case study. Critical Race Theory was the theoretical framework for analysis and interpretation of the data. The trustworthiness of the research was established through (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability.

In establishing credibility, the researcher sought to demonstrate an accurate picture of the phenomena under study. To allow transferability, ample detail was provided of the context of the fieldwork. To meet dependability, the research was reported in detail to enable a future researcher to repeat the study. Finally, confirmability was established by demonstrating the findings emerged from the data and not the researcher's own bias or predispositions.

The data analysis spiral, which includes data managing, reading, memoing, describing, classifying, interpreting, representing, and visualizing, was used to analyze the data. This process allowed the researcher to move in analytic circles rather than a fixed linear approach. Though the researcher entered with the data and exits with an account or narrative, the researcher touched on several facets of analysis and circles on the data analysis spiral.

Chapter 4 addresses the results of the study. Chapter 4 has four sections: (a) the demographic data of the five participants, (b) personal portrait of each participant, (c) the findings by research questions and emerging themes, and (d) summary of the chapter.

CHAPTER 4 - Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of a multiple participant case study investigating the lived experiences of five Mexican American females currently attending Midwestern University as doctoral students. The chapter has four sections: (a) the demographic data of the five participants; (b) personal portrait of each participant; (c) the findings of the case study by research questions and emerging themes, and (d) summary of the chapter.

Each participant was interviewed individually from August 2009 through November 2009. Four out of five participants were interviewed twice. The initial interview was an hour and a half with four of the five participants. The second interview proceeded in the same manner as the first. One participant, due to distance, was interviewed once for three hours. Prior to the initial interview, participants were asked to keep a reflective journal based on their high school experiences. There was no specific protocol for the reflective journal. In addition, participants also were asked to share any artifacts relating to themselves and high school, if they felt comfortable in doing so. Two participants shared photos of themselves taken during their high school years. One participant shared her reflective journal. All participants dialogued with the researcher through electronic mail to share additional comments and to clarify statements made during the interview.

The interview questions were semi-structured and open-ended (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The interviews were taperecorded and then transcribed. Each participant in the study was given a draft copy of the transcript to member check for accuracy. Each

participant had the option of deleting any information shared and to make corrections to clarify statements. Four of the five participants offered small corrections. One participant deleted several comments made during the interview.

The researcher sought to present “the juice of the lived experience[s]” in depth from the participants’ interviews (Marx, 2001; Scheurich, 1997, p. 63). The narratives demonstrate an important tenet of Critical Race Theory: storytelling is a way to draw on the knowledge of Mexican American females’ lived experiences with racism in high school. The participants shared their lived experiences to “name their reality” (Bernal, 2002; Espino et al., 2010; Fernandez, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 13; Shields, 2008; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). In addition, these Mexican American females, no longer silent, used their voices to share their “tabooed” experiences of racism (Montoya, 1994, p. 22).

It is the “gift” of Critical Race Theory that gives voice to the stories of these Mexican American women by challenging the dominant scholarship that would “dehumanize and depersonalize” them (Bernal, 2002; Delgado, 1989, 1993b; Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 272; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Tate, 1997). Thus, CRT provides a framework for uncovering the experiences of racism as experienced by Mexican American females in public education by examining how race and gender intersect (Crenshaw, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Demographics

Table 4.1 includes the following demographic characteristics for each participant: (a) self-identification, (b) birthplace, (c) parents, (d) highest education level of parents, (e) bilingual, (f) honor class or advanced placement, (g) gifted program, (h) siblings, (i)

age, (j) socioeconomic status (self-reported), (k) highest education level of siblings (l) birth order, (m) recipient of scholarship during high school, (n) college major (o) academic level, and (p) familial order for Ph.D.

Table 4.1 Demographic Information for Participants

Pseudonym	Carmela	Francisca	Margarita	Guadalupe	Teresa
Self-identification	Mexican American	Mexican American	Mexican American	Mexican American	Mexican American
Birthplace	Midwest	Southwest	Midwest	Mexico	West
Parent(s)	2	2	2	2	2
Highest Education Level of Parents	Father <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GED Mother <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate degree 	Father <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dropped out of high school Mother <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GED 	Father <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's degree Mother <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's degree 	Father <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary Mother <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary 	Father <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dropped out of high school Mother <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GED
Bilingual	No	No	No	Yes	No
Honor classes/ Advanced placement	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gifted Program	No	No	No	No	No
Siblings:	2 Sisters	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 sisters • 1 brother 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 sister • 1 brother 	8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 sisters • 4 brothers 	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 sisters • 1 brother
Age	34	38	49	33	39

Pseudonym	Carmela	Francisca	Margarita	Guadalupe	Teresa
Socioeconomic status (SES) (self reported)	Low SES	Low SES	Lower Middle SES	Low SES	Low SES
Highest Education Level of Siblings	Sisters (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High School Diploma • Dropped out of high school 	Sisters (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master's degree • High School Diploma Brother (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High School Diploma 	Sister (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master's degree Brother (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High School Diploma 	Sisters (4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor's degree • Associate degree • Associate degree • Dropped out of high school Brothers (4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate degree • Three dropped out of high school 	Sisters (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master's degree • High School Diploma Brother (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High School Diploma
Birth Order	Middle	Youngest	Middle	Youngest	Oldest
Recipient of scholarship during high school	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
College Major	Education	Education	Education	Education	Education

Pseudonym	Carmela	Francisca	Margarita	Guadalupe	Teresa
Academic level	Doctoral Student	Doctoral Student	Doctoral Student	Doctoral Student	Doctoral Student
Familial Order for PhD.	First in Family	Second in Family	First in Family	First in Family	First in Family

Personal Portrait of Participants

This section provides descriptive demographics on the five participants. The information was collected during interviews, observations, and from reflective journals, checklists, e-mails, and photographs.

All participants in the study self-identified themselves as Mexican American. The average age of the participants is 39 years. One participant was the oldest in her family, two were middle children, and two were the youngest in their family. Four participants were born in the United States and one was born in Mexico. Only one participant considered herself bilingual in Spanish and English. The other four participants did not believe themselves fluent enough in Spanish to be bilingual.

In high school, all participants were in upper level classes that included advanced placement and/or honors classes. As a result of their excellence in high school, all participants were awarded scholarships to continue with their undergraduate degree. In the same manner, after completing their bachelor's degree, all were awarded scholarships to continue with their masters' degrees, and ultimately doctoral degrees. However, none of the participants were in the gifted program while attending high school. Nevertheless, the goal of all participants was "going to college" (Carmela). Overall, the participants would not be considered, as Francisca said, a "typical" Mexican American female.

The participants are all petite women, less than 5 feet 4 inches tall. Their skin complexion ranges from fair to honey. Their hair color varies from blond to dark brown. One participant has short hair; the other four participants have shoulder to waist-length hair. In addition, their eye color includes dark brown, light brown, and hazel. During the interviews, they readily shared their experiences.

All participants come from two parent homes. Moreover, both parents worked outside the home. Four of the participants stated they considered their status as poor. One participant considered her family status as lower middle class. Of the participants' mothers, one mother had a bachelor's degree, one had an associate degree, two completed their General Education Development (GED), and one did not finish high school. One father had a bachelor's degree; one had a GED, and three fathers did not finish high school. Thus, three participants had at least one parent who did not graduate from high school.

All the participants had at least one sister. Three participants each had a sister who obtained masters' degrees. One participant had a sister who had a bachelor's degree. One participant had two sisters with associate degrees. Two participants each had one sister with a high school diploma. Two participants each had one sister who dropped out of high school. Four of the participants had at least one brother. One participant had one brother with an associate's degree. The other three participants had at least one brother who had obtained a high school diploma. Only one participant had a brother drop out of high school.

All five participants currently attend Midwestern University as doctoral students in the same doctoral program in human sciences. Moreover, four out of five are the first in their family to obtain doctoral degrees. The personal portrait of the five participants is covered in the section below. The time frame extends through high school.

Personal Portrait: Carmela “an accepting person”

Carmela self-identified herself as Mexican American during the initial interview. She was born in Hoxey, Kansas, a small German farming town of about 2,000 people.

Carmela comes from a two-parent home. She is the middle child of three girls. One sister is four years older and the other sister is ten years younger. Her mother is American Indian and Irish and her father is Mexican American. Thus, at a young age she was aware of being Mexican American. Her family was one of two Mexican American families living in this rural area. Her mother and father sold produce from their produce stand to make a living. To supplement the family income, her father also hired himself out. However, Carmela recollected no one in her hometown would hire her father because he was Mexican American. Therefore, he had to travel, leaving his family behind to find work elsewhere.

Carmela was aware from the time she was small that she was Mexican American. During her early years, Carmela recalls making tortillas for her family everyday. In addition, she learned many of the cultural norms as part of her everyday life. Carmela shared that her parents did not raise her to appreciate being different. So, growing up she did not feel she was different from her White peers. However, in a low tone, she shared how difficult it was for her when the locals in the town where they lived referred to her father as a “dirty Mexican.”

During her junior year of high school, Carmela remembers her mom asking her if she wanted to go to college. And if she did want to go, she told Carmela she would have to do it on scholarships because the family did not have the funds to send her. Carmela stated that something “clicked” at this time when her mother said to her, “you don’t want to be flipping burgers the rest of your life.” It was after this conversation that Carmela stated in a resolute tone that she “never got a B in high school” or throughout her graduate courses.

During her senior year, Carmela saw a flyer in the hallway of her high school advertising music auditions at Barton County with a full scholarship. She knew she could sing and decided she wanted to audition so she could obtain the scholarship. Therefore, she went to her counselor and expressed her interest in the scholarship being offered at Barton County. To her amazement and astonishment, the response she received from her baffled counselor was “you want to go to college?” Carmela, undeterred, took the initiative to audition at Barton County. As a consequence, she shared with a satisfied smile, she was awarded the full scholarship and continued to receive others to continue her graduate course work.

Today Carmela is a 34-year-old married women with one child and another one on the way, working on her doctorate degree in education. Her hope is to be a better mother to her growing family and wife. Carmela seeks to obtain her Ph.D. in the near future and work in a college of human sciences where she wants to make a difference for diverse populations. Helping individuals who come from the same background as she does, she wants to be the person who makes a difference for them.

Personal Portrait: Francisca “ideal student”

Francisca was born in a Texas town with a population of 12,000. With a quick laugh and smile, she shared she considers herself Mexican American. Francisca comes from a two-parent home. Her mother worked as a secretary and her father as a diesel mechanic. Francisca has one older brother who is four years older, a “typical Latino,” meaning he got away with more than she or her sisters did. She also has one older sister, whom she considers like her in her educational beliefs. She reflects that her younger sister is “a typical youngest child.” Neither one of Francisca’s parents finished high

school, though her mother obtained her General Educational Development (GED) at a later date. Her mother dropped out during her freshman year and her father during his junior year of high school. Leaning forward, Francisca shared in a firm voice that both her parents felt strongly about education, which they saw as necessary for a successful future. In a low voice, she explained her father regretted not finishing high school because it prevented him from achieving other things in life.

In school, Francisca considered herself extremely shy and was always very quiet. For instance, she would rather “duck” her head rather than respond to a “hi.” However, with a humorous laugh, she shared that she avoided talking to others because she always had her “head in a book.” While growing up, Francisca’s father was battling cancer and her family had limited resources for anything other than essentials. As a consequence, both she and her older sister worked to help the family. She added in a calm voice that she was “pretty sure none of my teachers knew what was going on at home.”

In high school, Francisca often felt out of place due to her cultural background. One teacher in particular stood out in her memory. She recollected how a White English teacher during her senior year, who had taught for over 20 years, treated her and the other Latinas in class. The teacher often expressed in a covert manner to Francisca that she was not capable of performing at the same level as her White peers. Unfortunately for the teacher, Francisca was an excellent student and though she struggled, she still ended up with “As.” Francisca graduated the highest Mexican American in her graduating class, having taken all honors classes during her entire high school career. She also was the recipient of The Gates Millennium Scholars scholarship as well as several other scholarships.

Today Francisca is single, has no children, and is 38 years old. Francisca wants to complete her Ph.D. program and let things happen as they will in her life. However, she would like to work with Mexican American students and encourage them to persist with their education.

Personal Portrait: Margarita “eccentric intellect”

Margarita self-identified herself as Mexican American. She was born in a Kansas town with a population of over 250,000. She comes from a two-parent home and is the youngest of three children. Her sister is the eldest and was gone while Margarita was in high school. Her brother was the in the middle and was allowed to get away with more than she was because “he’s a boy.” With a slight smile and quiet voice, Margarita shared about her grandfather, born in Mexico, who had hoped for a son and got a daughter. Thus, her mother, as an only child, was permitted to go to college where she obtained a business administration degree. Her father also obtained a degree in business. Her mother worked until she had her first-born child. Her father was an executive with Boeing.

Margarita grew up in a predominantly White middle class neighborhood with a European last name. She shared it was “not cool to be a minority.” However, she recalled with fondness that her mother would make mashed potatoes and *fideo*, green beans, and *sopa*, or roast, and *enchiladas*. Her mother also used Spanish expressions such as “*pajaro, pajaro*” meaning “bird, bird” indicating to look up. Thus, when Margarita was choking on something, her mother would say “*pajaro, pajaro*” and Margarita automatically looked up. Nevertheless, Margarita added in a low tone, her mother forbade her to speak Spanish so that she would not be discriminated against.

Margarita considered herself to be an eccentric intellect and took every honors English class during high school since she always wanted to be an English teacher. During her high school years, she was the “perfect student,” who felt uncomfortable when White students misbehaved. She attributed her polite behavior to her mother’s raising (Simoniello, 1981). However, she recalled a longing to have an ethnic identity and wanting to be part of a group. After graduating from high school, she attended college on scholarships she was awarded. She also was in the first cohort group of “Grow Your Own” in the State of Kansas.

Today Margarita, a divorced mother, is 47 years old and considers herself the happiest she has ever been. This is in part due to her three children, her parents, a male friend, and her dog, Butch. Margarita currently is pursuing her doctoral degree in education. She hopes to teach at a university where she desires to influence pre-service teachers to have a proper understanding of students of color.

Personal Portrait: Guadalupe a “fighter”

Guadalupe self-identified herself as Mexican American when asked her racial identity. She comes from a two-parent family. Guadalupe is the youngest of nine siblings. Actually, she had ten siblings but one brother passed away twenty years earlier when she was about eleven. She was born in Juarez, Mexico. Guadalupe has four brothers and four sisters. Guadalupe’s parents came to the United States illegally on the 4th of July when she was little so that their children would have something different than they had. Her parents came here looking for the American dream, which included education. Her father worked as a truck driver and her mother worked at a beef packing plant. Coming to the United States provided their family with an opportunity to get a

high school education. Even if her brothers and sisters did not graduate high school, it was more than her father and mother obtained.

Guadalupe attended high school in a town of over 40,000 people. Due to her exceptional grades, she was able to take honors courses in high school. While in high school, she became pregnant her junior year. During this period of time, her White peers in her honors classes and teachers' expectations of her diminished due to her situation. However, she continued with her education and gave birth to her son during her junior year of high school. Her peers and educators continued to express she would not amount to much as a teen mother. Guadalupe dismissed the notion of being considered a failure due to her circumstances. She graduated from high school as "Outstanding Senior" and obtained scholarships from GI Forum and League of Latin American Citizens (LULAC) to attend college. Later she also received other scholarships to continue her master's degree and doctoral degree.

At 33, Guadalupe is a single parent with two children, a son and daughter. In addition, she is doctoral student in education. Her goal is to provide for her children. Guadalupe also wants to be employed in an administrative position at a university that reflects the changing face of America. Her desire is to work with all students so that they are aware of the need to interact with diverse students in society.

Personal Portrait: Teresa "a thinker"

Teresa was born in Texas and considers herself Mexican American. She comes from a two-parent home. Her mother dropped out of high school in the 7th grade, but since has finished high school. Her father dropped out of high school his junior year. Teresa, with a laugh, shared a photo of Texas, which has "1837" written on the back.

She added that her family was born in Texas before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. She has an older brother and two younger sisters. Her brother is two years older. One of her sisters currently is working on her doctorate degree in education. Her youngest sister graduated from high school.

Growing up, Teresa's father taught her to deny her Mexican heritage. Consequently, her family never observed or recognized any Mexican traditions or holidays. She contributed this to her father's firsthand experience of how poorly he and his siblings were treated for speaking Spanish. Thus, she never was allowed to identify herself as Mexican American.

In high school, Teresa remembered the difficulties experienced due to her family's financial situation. For instance, with an ironic laugh, she shared her family did not have the resources to obtain needed supplies for her honors class. Teresa did not begrudge this, rather she is thankful to her mother who advocated to keep her out of special education, since anyone with a Spanish surname often was placed in special education. Teresa graduated from high school and was awarded a full Reserve Office Training Corps (ROTC) scholarship to continue her education. She also was awarded other scholarships to continue with her graduate degrees.

Currently Teresa, 39, is a married mother of two, a daughter and son. It is her wish to provide financial and physical security for herself and her family. The opportunity to obtain her doctorate degree presented itself to Teresa in the form of a scholarship. Thus, she considers circumstances and opportunity have guided her life. With a definite statement, Teresa shared one of her goals is to be "Dr." and to make a difference for students like herself in higher education.

Findings by Research Questions and Emerging Themes

The themes that emerged from the research were experienced racism due to the intersection of race and gender for Mexican American women while in high school. The study investigated perceived racism in terms of the intersectionality of race and gender. The following four themes emerged based on the research questions:

1. In retrospect, what were these Mexican American women's perceptions of racism experienced while attending high schools (Bell, 1992; Collins, 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001)?

Theme: Racism is endemic and pervasive

2. What racial obstacles did these Mexican American women experience in high school (Alva, 1991; Collins 2000; Yosso, 2005)?

Theme: Colorblindness

3. What compelled these Mexican American women to complete high school and continue on to higher education despite racial obstacles (Bonilla-Santiago, 1999; Delgado, 1989; Solórzano et al., 2005)?

Theme: Navigating the system

Theme: Social Justice

This section is arranged in the following manner. Racism, which provides the foundation for current educational inequalities due to race and gender— is endemic and pervasive — will be discussed. This theme reflects how high school counselors, educators, and peers treated participants. Second, is colorblindness, that is the notion to treat all students the same, which includes tracking, stereotypes, and identity. The third theme was social justice, which involves participants empowering all students of color,

advocating for all students of color, and providing equal opportunities for all students of color. Finally, is the emerging theme of navigating the system, which is surviving and coping while in high school through maintaining the status quo, resistance, and assimilation into White culture. Table 4.2 reflects the major themes of the intersection of race and gender and related subthemes that emerged.

Table 4.2 Research Questions and Emerging Themes of the Intersection of Race and Gender

In retrospect, what were these Mexican American women's perceptions of racism experienced while attending high schools? (Bell, 1992; Collins, 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001)	What racial obstacles did these Mexican American women experience in high school? (Alva, 1991; Collins 2000; Yosso, 2005)	What compelled these Mexican American women to complete high school and continue on to higher education despite racial obstacles? (Bonilla-Santiago, 1999; Delgado, 1989; Solórzano et al., 2005)	What compelled these Mexican American women to complete high school and continue on to higher education despite racial obstacles? (Bonilla-Santiago, 1999; Delgado, 1989; Solórzano et al., 2005)
Theme: Racism is Endemic and Pervasive	Theme: Colorblindness	Theme: Social Justice	Theme: Navigating the System
Counselors	Tracking	Empowering all students of color	Maintained status quo
Educators	Stereotypes	Advocating for all students of color	Resistance
Peers	Identity	Providing equal opportunities for all students of color	Assimilation into White culture

Intersectionality in this study embraces both race and gender oppression.

Mexican American participants' experiences cannot be discussed exclusively only on the

“basis of gender” or “on the bases of race” (Crenshaw, 1989; Harris, 1990b, p. 587). To do so would be to pit “one struggle [race] against the other [gender]” (hooks, 1984, p. 52). The voice of the participants is distinct in the sense that they speak from their lived experiences of perceived racism while attending high school. The themes are: (a) racism is endemic and pervasive, (b) colorblindness, (c) social justice, and (d) navigating the system.

Research Question 1: In retrospect, what were these Mexican American women’s perceptions of racism experienced while attending high school?

Theme 1: Racism Is Endemic and Pervasive

Theme 1, racism is endemic and pervasive, is a pattern that emerged from the data. It focused specifically on participants’ perceived racism in high school and the racial assaults the participants endured from counselors, educators, and peers. Racism is endemic in the sense that race influences all decisions made by law. Racism also is pervasive in that racism is engrained deeply in the conscious and unconscious (Delgado & Stefancic 2001; Matsuda et al., 1993; Prins, 2007; Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002; Quiroz, 2001; Vaught 2008) attitude of Whites towards Mexican Americans. Since racism is sometimes unconscious, it is difficult to address the everyday microaggressions of racism that are subtle (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Harrell, 2000; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Solorzano, Walter, & Carroll, 2002). In high school, the participants’ perceptions of racism were noted from: (a) counselors, (b) educators, and (c) peers.

Counselors

Counselors are in positions to make decisions on behalf of students with the students' best interests in mind. However, the Mexican American participants in the study, like other Mexican Americans, stated their high school counselor did not give them advice on which educational direction to pursue. For instance, Teresa, wide-eyed and with a laugh shared, "I actually had my high school counselor tell me that I should be taking cosmetology instead of Algebra 2 because when I was left barefoot and pregnant I would have a way to support myself and my children!"

Teresa, in an indignant high-pitched tone, noted that at sixteen she neither had any children nor a boyfriend. However, according to her counselor, she was, "just telling you the way you [Mexican American] girls end up." Teresa recalled lightly dismissing the comment and letting it pass and she continued with her college-bound curriculum in high school.

Guadalupe recalled with humor being separated from her White peers and grouped with other Mexican American high school students for college visits. The group was taken across the State of Kansas to visit a different type of college campus, Job Corps. Her counselor encouraged her to enroll at Job Corps and obtain the nine-month certificate for clerical work because, she shared in a flippant tone,

This was something he [counselor] would recommend for me to be, to go to Flint Hills [vocational school] and be trained to be a secretary because he flat out told me that I was a statistic and I wasn't going to amount to too much!

With a vigorous laugh, she commented she did "not even know what a statistic was" at the time. Guadalupe simply remembered being excited to take a road trip. She thought

that “to him [counselor], he was doing the right thing.” Without realizing, the counselor believed Mexican Americans “did not have potential to go to college” (Guadalupe).

Francisca recalls being tested for the gifted program. However, the recommendation from the counselor to her mother was that Francisca skip from 6th to 7th grade rather than be placed in the gifted program. The counselor’s thought was “oh, she wasn’t in the gifted program in elementary school, so she can’t be in it now.” Francisca emphasized, “and yet they [counselors] tested me at seventh grade level, but I couldn’t be in the gifted program. And there were not people of color in the gifted program at the time.” Francisca is not resentful at not having been placed in the gifted program. She felt that at the time her mother made the best decision for her not to skip a grade.

Carmela recalled seeing a flyer in the hallway of her high school advertising music auditions for full scholarships for college. She recalled thinking “Wow! I sing. I could do that!” She recalled immediately running to see her guidance counselor and said, “Hey, I saw a flyer out there and I think I want to do this. So what do I do? Do I call them or what?” The counselor’s response was, “You want to go to college? I just really thought you and Paul [pseudonym] would just get married, have kids, and settle down.” Carmela, fuming and agitated stated, “And I’m like an ‘A’ average, ‘A’ student so for my guidance counselor to say ‘you want to go to college?’ She [counselor] acted like it was the most novel idea ever. I couldn’t believe it!”

Teresa, Guadalupe, Francisca, and Carmela were in advanced and honors classes in high school. However, none of them were in the gifted program like many other Mexican American students who overall are underrepresented in the gifted program (Ford, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Prins, 2007). As a result, the ethnocentric

bias of their counselors was manifested in viewing their diverse differences as “deviant” (Espin, 1997, p. 11), as noted in their remarks. In addition, the counselors’ racism camouflaged the oppressive educational structure and naturalized it. Therefore, the participants had to be determined to succeed in high school, since they were not encouraged or valued by their counselors.

Some students of color have been able to penetrate the barriers (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2004) surrounding the ivy tower of advanced placement and honors courses. However, they are few in number. Ladson-Billings (1995) has suggested the educational inequity to a high quality and rigorous curriculum has been enjoyed almost exclusively by White students, i.e., honors, and/or gifted. White is the norm of what is normal and acceptable (Bowman, 2001; Espin, 1997; Casteñeda, 1990). Critical Race Theory has scrutinized this notion since DuBois (1997) wrote about the “color line.” (p. 34). The experiences of four of the Mexican American participants illustrate how counselors perceive Mexican American students through the lens of pervasive racism.

Educators

The student population in the United States is becoming more diverse, whereas the teaching force is increasingly European American, monocultural, and middle class (Banks, 2006; Gandara, 2010; Orfield & Lee, 2007; Sprott, 2009). Most educators grew up and attended predominantly White colleges and universities where they were not prepared for the growing diversity (Ferri & Conner, 2005; Gay, 2000; Howard, 2007). Moreover, 83% to 93% of all current education students are White and of European descent (Gay, 2000, Howard, 2007, NCES, 2004, Sprott, 2009) and the teaching force

teaching them are 90% White (Gay, Dingus, & Jackson, 2003; Howard, 2007; Sprott, 2009). Consequently, many teachers view students from subordinated groups from a deficit perspective (Jones & Fuller, 2003; Solorzano, 1997; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). The participants experienced some degree of pain in their learning. The pain felt by Francisca, Carmela, and Teresa is recognized in their stories shared about their educators.

Francisca recalled remembering “my English teacher [White] in 12th grade [honors literature]” who expected “perfection ...more from some [Mexican] students than she did others [White].” With an amused laugh Francisca shared,

She always seemed amazed that I actually was able to comprehend the literature.

She [teacher] always corrected my papers. It was always a grammar thing. It was never my content. And she was constantly making faces at me and questioning where I came up with my ideas and my interpretations and stuff. And so even though some of my friends [White] would turn in junk for their assignments, they would still get decent grades but I had to do ten times better than them in order to earn my A.

Francisca “still ended up with As in their classes just because I had to prove that to them.” Francisca never received a “pat on the head ‘you are doing a great job’ because they expected it of me.” Therefore, Francisca continued to turn in her assignments without questioning why she had to do more than her White peers or why she was maltreated.

Carmela remembered how the racism in her small town increased “exponentially” due to the influx of Mexican Americans who came to work at a feedlot near town. In a slow and low voice she recollected, “The town didn’t know how to deal with this new

diversity [Mexican American immigrants] and so anyone associated with the Mexican American culture, kind of got, assumptions and stereotypes got placed on her [Mexican Americans] within the school system.” Carmela added in a low, thoughtful tone, “I don’t think they [White administration and educators] knew really how to relate.” As a consequence, Mexican American students endured overt racist comments such as “bastard kids,” “dirty Mexican Americans,” and “no good.” These racist comments were tolerated in school as normal and ordinary. Carmela noted that she did not have to endure them herself.

Teresa had, she conceded with a devious smile, a “different teacher” for math her senior year. As she leaned forward, both hands facing up and spread out on the table, she shared her experience in a stressed tone:

I was struggling with a problem and she threw the books down on the floor,
slammed her hand on the chalkboard, and screamed at the top of her lungs at me
‘you must be dumb, stupid, retarded, and definitely a waste of my time!’

Stunned, Teresa recalled, telling herself “I thought I am not going to cry, I am not going to cry” as she walked back to her desk, the eyes of students starting at her. Teresa refused to let her teacher fail her for not attending class. However, she vomited every time she had to attend class, but with a smile and laugh, she stressed, “I went.”

The classroom for Francisca, Carmela, and Teresa became a place to encounter the racist perception that Mexican Americans are “never as capable as white peers, even unable to learn” (hooks, 1994, p. 4). The racist actions endured by the three participants from educators were both subtle and overt. Yet, they persisted in attending their classes

despite their educators lack of confidence and low academic expectations of them. Consequently, the participants were treated like objects and not as people.

Williams (1987) states, “I do believe, however, that the simple matter of color of one’s skin so profoundly affects the way one is treated” (p. 404). Thus, according to CRT theorists, racism may account for students of color having a “low value” of self (Lynn & Parker, 2006, p. 266). The participants’ shared experiences of racism offer insights into their life experiences at the margins of society in a “profound and inescapable cultural fabric” in education, which corresponds to White and middle class values (Gay, 2000, p. 9). It is these White middle class values that are engrained deeply in education and considered the norm for all students. Hence, the participants were disrespected by being considered as not academically capable. As a consequence, racism from educators endangers the full potential of Mexican American students’ academic abilities.

Peers

Everyone is a product of his or her own culture. As a result, people are perceived based on limited cultural perspectives (Kuykendall, 2004). Like all students, Mexican American females are human and seek acceptance and appreciation for who they are (Cammarota & Romero, 2006; Nichols, White, & Price, 2006). Often their peer groups satisfy these needs. Guadalupe, Teresa, and Francisca worked side by side their White peers in class in their high school honor courses. However, from their point of view, they were not accepted fully.

Guadalupe stated, with raised eyebrows and an agitated tone, that she felt she had “to meet those standards that are the White, that are their [White] standards they [White]

set. Like they set the norm, they set the standard and we [Mexican Americans] just try to reach them.” The standard included how to write and think.

Guadalupe realized the White race may be dominant but thought it was “bogus” that they also should set the “norm of the standard” for Mexican Americans. However, Guadalupe realized that she had to demonstrate to her White peers that she could meet “the standard” set.

Teresa shared the color line historically drawn by her White peers in high school was deeply etched into the institution. She recalled, that it was,

Pretty clear that the prom queen was going to be White; the head cheerleader was going to be White; the mascot was going to . . . be White. The valedictorian and salutatorian were going to be White, White. It was pretty much set.

Teresa, with a calm tone, thought that at the time it had nothing to do with race or gender, rather, she thought it had to do with opportunity. As a result, Teresa did not question how educational systems operated. Nor, did she question why it was always White students and never Mexican Americans students who were the “prom queen . . . head cheerleader . . . mascot . . . valedictorian and salutatorian.” Consequently, she, like her other Mexican American peers, continued to consent to her marginalized status.

Francisca felt that during class, her White peers accepted her. However, “as far as like being friends” and doing things outside school, she “didn’t get along with them.” Consequently, Francisca, with legs crossed and a slight smile stated, “I didn’t hang out with them [White female peers] or go to parties or anything like that.” Francisca related in a thoughtful voice, that she was not really sure why because “academically I was on

par or better than most of them [White].” However, this did not appear to make any difference to her White peers, who did not include her in activities outside class.

Guadalupe, Teresa, and Francisca on the surface were not treated as being different and were “accepted” in high school honors/advanced classes by their White peers. However, once outside the classroom it was evident they were not part of the group. Francisca articulated it well when she stated that academically she was “on par or better” than their White peers. Guadalupe, Teresa, and Francisca did not lament the lack of other Mexican American students in their classes nor did they begrudge their White peers for their actions. It is interesting to note because racism has a greater impact on children than on adults.

This was a lively part of the interview. Participants shared their lived experiences with racism as a woman of color. Initially, racism was downplayed. In other words, the participants portrayed racism as no big deal. However, with probing, the researcher discovered that racism did, in fact, exist in high school. The participants became nervous as they contemplated their lived experiences of racism in high school as women of color.

Power and oppression dominated the school setting attended by the participants and not teaching and learning. Education is a form of privileged cultural capital of which Mexican American females deserve their share. However, Critical Race scholars recognize racism is “deeply ingrained legally culturally, and psychologically” in all aspects of life (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Matsuda et al., 1993; Milner, 2008; Tate, 1997, p. 234). Delgado and Stefancic (2001) brought to the forefront that racism is “normal” in American society. Furthermore, it is ingrained deeply not only in American society but also in the collective unconscious minds and

everyday attitudes of Whites towards people of color. Because racism is unconscious, it is difficult to expose so that White people can realize how everyday acts of racism are subtle and difficult to regulate by law.

Research Question 2: What racial obstacles did these Mexican American women experience in high school?

Theme 2: Colorblindness

A second theme that emerged from the data focused on colorblindness and the effects it had on the participants in high school through tracking, stereotyping, and identity. Colorblindness is the notion that all individuals should be treated the same regardless of their race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Gotanda, 1991). Today, the Supreme Court holds that it is unlawful to take note of race as a way to remedy historical wrongs. However, Critical Race Theory discounts the idea of colorblindness as a way of addressing U.S. racial problems. A colorblind society ignores and devalues all aspects of race (Gotanda, 1991; Guinier & Torres, 2002).

The following addresses what the participants shared about their perceptions of colorblindness while attending high school. Colorblindness manifested itself in (a) tracking, (b) stereotyping, and (c) identity.

Tracking

Tracking has been defined historically as “the practice of grouping high school students by ability into a series of courses with differentiated curriculums,” i.e., academic, general, or vocational (Carbonaro & Gamoran, 2002; Futrell & Gomez, 2008, p. 74). Tracking is one the most insidious forms of racism. None of the participants were

tracked into vocational programs. However, they were aware other Mexican American students in their high schools were not in the advanced or honor classes with them. For instance, Margarita had gym class with Mexican American students. However, she stated, “I was in honors; I was in advanced placement,” however, “it was very, very rare for a Mexican American ... to get into an advanced class.” Consequently, “they [students in honors class] would all be White.”

Margarita recalled, after a short pause in a low tone, the classrooms she was in were “pretty isolated ... even different parts of the building.” Margarita did not have much knowledge “about what was going on with them [Mexican Americans].” It was her “suspicion,” however, that “they [those in advanced courses/honors and those in vocational programs] were treated differently across the board.”

Teresa, whose father’s brothers and sisters were placed in special education due to language and surname, knew firsthand from her father that,

Anyone with that last name was put in special education . . . What I realized was my classmates [those with Hispanic surnames] weren’t in the same classes I was . . . they [Mexican American] were in remedial math ... correlative [basic] language arts ... we [Mexican Americans] were tracked.

Teresa was aware “we had a tracking system in my high school.” It was her belief her Mexican American classmates “chose” to take basic level courses. Teresa related that in her high school, educators “encouraged Latinas to take vocational classes. Because we had salon, vocational classes and she [counselor] would encourage her Latinas [those counselor advised] to take that [vocational] class.” Teresa knew her childhood Latino

friends were not in her classes and accepted that she went into the “academic track and they didn’t.”

Margarita and Teresa were aware of the Mexican American students in high school. They saw them in the hallways and in gym class. However, the participants speculated it was because their Mexican American peers did not desire or want to be in honor classes. Thus, they did not investigate or question why students were separated. As a consequence, while in high school the participants did not dwell on or recognize the educational inequalities.

A racist practice that begins in elementary school is to sort students by ability, their perceived capabilities for learning, on the basis of test scores. As a result, by the time the student reaches high school they are tracked into various vocational programs. Explanations range from sociocultural to genetic (*Harvard Law Review*, 1989; Oakes, 1990; Steele, 2009). For instance, an old argument is that “some groups of children, because of racial . . . heredity, simply do not have the mental capacity to be very high achievers” (Oakes, 1990, p. 5). Thus, Mexican American students find themselves tracked into vocational programs with the promise of a future if they complete the program.

Stereotyping

Poor academic achievement of Mexican American students has been well documented in the research literature (Alva, 1991; Jones & Fuller, 2003; NWLC & MALDEF, 2009; Nicholas, White & Price, 2006; Oakes, 1990; Solórzano, et al., 2005; Spring, 2001). Reasons cited for underachievement range from low socioeconomic status, limited English proficiency, and race (Anthrop-Gonzalez, Velez, & Garrett, 2005;

Jones, & Fuller, 2003; Kozol, 1991; Saracho & Martinez-Hancock, 2007). This type of deficit thinking encourages cultural stereotypes about Mexican Americans. The result is what is known as stereotype threat (Gandara, 2010; Steele, 2009; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Viadero, 2007), which plays a powerful role in the poor academic achievement of African Americans, Latinos, and girls (Aronson, 2004). For instance, Francisca, who learned to read at the age of three, recalled being told in middle school by her teacher “we [Mexican Americans] weren’t learning.” Later in high school, her English teacher “didn’t believe” Francisca was capable of fully comprehending and completing the assigned reading coursework. Francisca remembered with raised eyebrows, the outcome of her assignments she turned in,

She [White teacher] tried to be really hard when she graded my papers. She always corrected my papers. It was always a grammar thing. It was never my content. It’s as though my grammar were, that I had, that it was something wrong with the way that I wrote and spoke.

Francisca did not give her teacher’s prejudiced attitude toward her much thought. She continued to attend class and do the assignments regardless of how hard the teacher graded her work. Francisca recognized her teacher continued to grade her assignments strictly.

The interaction between Francisca and her teacher denied Francisca being taken seriously by her teacher since the teacher was trying to find fault in the assignments Francisca submitted. Moreover, Francisca was denied a full learning experience and had to endure oppression by her teacher. The teacher’s attitude exposed her biases and what she held as certain truths towards Mexican American students.

A large number of junior students who wanted to take the advanced computer class forced out Teresa even though she qualified her sophomore year. As a result, she was placed in a sewing class that she did not want to take. The sewing class was made up of “Latinas.” “And the teacher would always refer to Mexican American females [in her classroom] in a condescending manner as ‘you girls, you girls.’ ‘You girls always have boyfriends and you girls always have hickies, you girls’.” With a jovial laugh, Teresa “figured” her teacher to be “some dumb home economics teacher, who couldn’t be a math or science teacher.”

Teresa was the victim of an educational system who downplayed her capacity to be in the computer class by using the pretext that she was a sophomore. It was as though the counselor placed Teresa in the most appropriate class for her due to her race and gender. Teresa tolerated the class and home economic teacher’s comments by rationalizing her home economics teacher was “dumb.”

Francisca and Teresa had racial stereotypes imposed on them by White educators within the classroom. Both were perceived as unable to have the academic skills to belong in advanced courses made up of White students. As a result, students who are stereotyped may believe that their difficulties are a limitation of their academic abilities. However, Francisca and Teresa, though not comprehending why they were treated the way they were, were not hindered by the difficulties they experienced. Moreover, Francisca and Teresa did not let negative stereotypes take their toll on them to underperform in any class.

Stereotypes are frustrating for individuals who are stereotyped since in education stereotypes affect the skills and self-confidence of the individuals stereotyped. The

cumulative toll of stereotypes is that some students may be pressured to underperform. Thus, to have school success, students must have a strong sense of belonging. For this to happen, students must perceive they are valued and accepted, otherwise students “are likely to underperform” (Gandara, 2010; Nichols, White & Price, 2006; Steele, 2009, p. 165).

Identity

Identity is situational, malleable, historically situated, and politically positioned (Anzaldua, 1987, 1999; Hurtado & Gurin, 1987; Oboler, 1995; Valle & Torres, 2000; Zarate et al., 2005). However, not all authors agree how to approach Latino/as’ [Mexican Americans’] fluid identity. Oboler (1995) stressed the need to inspect the intersectionality of ethnic identity with racial history, gender, and class. Anzaldua (1987, 1999) suggests moving away from the static definitions of ethnicity and focus instead on the identity where dominant and subordinate culture simultaneously clash and combine a form of *mestiza* border consciousness.

Self-identification for Carmela and Teresa was not attributed to anything specific. Both were born in the United States but neither used their birthplace to explain why they identified as Mexican American. Moreover, Carmela has a Mexican-born father and a American Indian/Irish mother. Teresa comes from several generations of Mexican Americans. However, both were conscious of their identity. For instance, Carmela stated with warmth:

I was aware of it from the time I was little that I was Mexican American. I grew up making tortillas for my dad everyday. And there were a lot of cultural norms of the Mexican American culture that we did that I grew being a part [of].

On the other hand, Teresa's family, which is several generations old, theorized a linear identity progression based on the birthplace of several generations, "we didn't cross the border, the border crossed us!" Teresa shared with a hearty laugh. Teresa was aware of being Mexican American but did not acknowledge it until she was in high school. Since her family had been in the community for several generations and she was cognizant "other people [White]" noticed she was "Mexican American" but, "not that kind of Mexican American," different than "those Mexican Americans out there." "Those Mexicans out there" were recent immigrants to the community who were called "wetbacks." Thus, the community identified Teresa as Mexican American and not a "wetback," who were the recent arrivals from Mexico. In this sense, Teresa appeared to be satisfied she was Mexican American.

Of the five participants, only Teresa and Carmela volunteered to identify themselves as Mexican American. Teresa appears to have identified through her father and Carmela based her identity on a several generations of Mexican Americans. However, they did not fully see themselves *different* from their White peers. They were both involved in extracurricular activities, had White friends, and were in a challenging academic program.

Although there are numerous factors that comprise an individual's identity and may be prominent or legally relevant, the identity trait is seldom predictable. Both Teresa and Carmela were struggling trying to accommodate being both Mexican American and American within a society that did not accept them for their difference.

Unexpectedly, when the other three participants were asked to self-report, they all identified as Mexican American. During the interviews, they did not volunteer the

information. Perhaps they felt that it was obvious they were Mexican American.

Consequently, the need to identify as Mexican American was immaterial. Of interest is that no pattern emerged to explain why all participants self-identified as Mexican American.

According to Crenshaw (2009), the category of identity either excludes or marginalizes those who are different. Thus, for women of color, in this case Mexican American women, they are regulated to a position of self-awareness as being different. The claim that race is not recognized is an attempt to deny the reality (Barajas & Ronnkvist, 2007; Espino et al., 2010; Gotanda, 2000; Nash, 2008) of what Mexican American students endure on a daily basis in high school. Though Teresa and Carmela did not advertise their identity, it was obvious to those around them they were Mexican American. Still, both found themselves wavering between maintaining their Mexican American identity and the influence of the White culture in which they were emerged.

The technique of “noticing but not considering race” implies race is not “considered” (Gotanda, 2000, p. 35). In other words, colorblindness is a technique for combating racial subordination. Critical Race theorists argue it is a way to maintain domination over people of color (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Freire, 2008; Gotanda, 2000). Nonrecongnition of race “fosters a systemic denial of racial subordination . . . thereby allowing it to continue” (Gotanda, 2000, p. 35) and supports the supremacy of White interests. For Mexican Americans, colorblindness fostered and supported a system full of barriers, which Teresa, Margarita, Francisca, Carmela, and Guadalupe were able to penetrate via navigation. An old *consejo* (advice) by Teresa’s father sums up why the

participants did not give up on their education despite a colorblind system, which was perpetuated in their high school:

Mi hija [my daughter] what you know nobody can take away from you. They can rob you, they can steal from you, they can beat you, they can torture you, whatever, . . . but what you know nobody can ever take away from you. And that's more valuable than things.

Research Question 3a: What compelled these Mexican American women to complete high school and continue on to higher education despite racial obstacles?

Theme 3: Social Justice

A third theme that emerged from the data focused on social justice, in part framed by their high school experiences: (a) empowering all students of color, (b) advocating for all students of color, and (c) providing equal opportunities for all students of color.

Empowering All Students of Color

Empowering others is the role of the individual who empowers others by being an ally in the face of racism (Tatum, 2009). Carmela and Guadalupe “made it” by graduating from high school and felt a responsibility to reach back and help other Mexican American women. Carmela, in a low sad tone, shared her regret at not being around to help another Mexican American female that was “hurt and wounded by people [White educators] that had no right to do that.” As a consequence, Carmela shared,

I think that is also part of why I am driven to work with this population [Mexican American] . . . that's the direction, what've I've gravitated towards is to make a

difference. I just want to make a difference for them [Mexican American females] ... and that they have assets and they are amazing.

Guadalupe, the only Mexican American female in her advanced classes, is passionate about helping other Mexican American students stay in school and “the retention of them [Mexican Americans] as well. But not only that, in creating a diverse learning environment. Because . . . we [Mexican Americans] are everywhere.” Although Guadalupe was the only Mexican American female in her honors classes, she thrived. However, she wants to reach back and empower other Mexican American females so that they too may succeed.

Both Guadalupe and Carmela highlighted the need to let Mexican American females know they are available to support who they are — that it is a good thing to be Mexican American. According to Carmela, “it’s ok to be different” and “they can do a whole lot.” The difference does not make them deviant.

Education for Mexican American females in the early 20th century had two purposes, one to “Americanize” the Mexican American child and the other, to be available for labor (Bowman, 2001; Martinez, 2001; Spring, 2001, p. 201). However, parents encouraged their Mexican American children to strive for a better life. Yosso (2005) notes that historically people of color have utilized their social capital to attain an education, legal justice, employment, and health care. In turn, these people of color gave the information and resources back to their community. For example, *Mutualistas* known as mutual aid societies, created and maintained social networks to give back. Likewise, Guadalupe and Carmela want to empower Mexican American females to succeed in their education.

Advocating for All Students of Color

Role models and mentors are influential individuals who inspire others to be concerned for social justice in school and community for students who experience the intersection of race, class, gender, language, immigration status, accent, and phenotype, i.e., the students who “do not fit neatly into a single category” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 335). Margarita, who is biracial, has a White father and Mexican American mother, believes that, overall, people are good. She wants to influence future White teachers who, “will listen to another person that they perceive as White when that person says ‘yes racism is alive and well.’”

Margarita is conscious she passes for White. Thus, she wants to use her “White appearance” to communicate with and be heard by Whites. In this way, majoritarian stories are challenged, which promote the misconception that Mexican American students’ academic failure is due only to their culture.

In the past, there have been many individuals who committed themselves to justice for all, though their values helped maintain the culture of White domination (Delgado, 1984; hooks, 1994). For example, individuals sought to draw upon the beliefs of eugenics to explain the educational failure of students of color (Watkins, 2001). Margarita desires to use her “White appearance” and knowledge as an “outsider within” to advance social justice for Mexican Americans by nullifying the false and belittling propaganda-type of educational history about Mexican Americans, which was handed to them by majoritarian Whites.

Providing Equal Opportunities for All Students of Color

Equal opportunity is associated with the idea of providing equal access to the same educational opportunities for all students regardless of race (Ladson-Billings, 1998). In high school, Carmela believed the school administration did not “know how to interact” with Mexican Americans. Thus, “they didn’t address it [culture].” Carmela’s prior experiences with other Mexican American females who were denied educational opportunities wants to make a difference for diverse populations to provide “access for opportunities.” “Because, I’ve had someone in my life who that if it wouldn’t have been for them, I would not be here today. One of them, of course, would be my mom.”

Margarita believed that some of the administrators and teachers were aware of the lack of opportunities for Mexican American students. For example, regarding sports she said, “I think that the coaches were, I think that the White coaches were aware [lack of Mexican American students], there were never any of the Mexican American kids on the teams, ever!” In her honor courses she shared “So, yea, they would all be White. And later, by the time I was a junior, a few Asian kids, Vietnamese, but no, always, always, always all White.” However, she was aware of the diverse student population that existed in her school. As a consequence, she wants to influence future teachers who, in turn, will “cherish” and provide opportunities to all students. Margarita admitted at times it is “easier to say ‘you know, I just don’t know if I’m going to be able to do this.’” However, she credits her mother, who compelled her to succeed.

Carmela and Margarita proudly credited their mothers, who encouraged them to pursue other opportunities available in high school. However, they were mindful of the

lack of opportunities for other Mexican American females. Thus, it is their hope to be there for other Mexican American females like their mothers were for them.

Of interest is that Carmela and Margarita are the only biracial participants in the study. They also are the only two who have bluish/hazel eyes and light/blond hair. The other three participants have dark brown hair and light brown eyes.

Carmela and Margarita were both aware they enjoyed opportunities that were denied to other Mexican American females. According to Bell (1980), it is obvious that racial equality is not regarded as legitimate by a large segment of Whites. Moreover, local control of public education may result in the maintenance of the status quo that preserves superior educational opportunities for Whites at the expense of others, such as Mexican Americans (Bell, 1980; Cammarota & Romero, 2006; Watkins, 2001). Harris (1995) argues that this is due to the history of race and racism in the United States and the role that U.S. jurisprudence has placed on conceptions of race. Thus, the notion of Whiteness can be considered a property interest, granting those who meet the strict standard of White the right to enjoy opportunities denied to Mexican Americans.

The immediate goals of the participants included finishing their doctoral degrees. In addition, they wanted a fulfilling career using their hard-earned degrees. They want to be a role model for other women of color and work in an environment that encourages education because they love learning. They also want to provide support and encouragement for others, as others did for them. The participants in this study, though a small group, verified the reality of other Mexican Americans' unjust experiences. Freire's (2008) belief is that oppressed people tend to have a clearer vision of reality than their oppressors. Delgado (2000) contends that social reform begins with knowledge,

which comes from a disaffected group who advocates for society at large. Moreover, if the knowledge has merit, it eventually turns into a canon (Matsuda, 1989). In addition, the change can come from a small group for whom “the standard social arrangements don’t work” (Delgado, 2000, p. 256). Thus, progress springs from adversity and a sense that the world does not supply the needs of all people.

While the goals of social justice may be the same for all people, missing are the experiences of Mexican Americans, which may be different. The lived experiences of Teresa, Margarita, Francisca, Carmela, and Guadalupe cannot be captured in general terms, without taking into consideration their race. To do so would obscure their identity and submerge their perspectives on social justice. What they observe is different because they see through their lenses as Mexican American females.

Critical Race theorists claim that issues of racial inequality have overlooked and underplayed the role that race has played in society (Parker & Lynn, 2002). According to Bell (1992), CRT has focused on the limitations of the law, which operate on dominant White terms. As a result, CRT has engaged in exposing such concepts as colorblind interpretations of the law and meritocracy, which are hegemonic control of the social arrangements in U.S. society (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Donnor, 2005; Matsuda, 1987; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Watkins, 2001). As a result, CRT developed a body of intersecting paradigms (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Parker & Lynn, 2002), which allow the perspectives of Mexican American females who experience racism to be used in advancing social justice.

Research Question 3b: What compelled these Mexican American women to complete high school and continue on to higher education despite racial obstacles?

Theme 4: Navigating the System

A final theme that emerged from the data was how the participants navigated the system to their advantage through maintaining the status quo, resistance, and assimilation. Navigational skills are necessary for people of color to learn so as to maneuver through social institutions. At times, people of color are unaware this process involves confronting the negative stereotypes of Mexican Americans that are driven by negative images and ideas. However, they must learn to navigate through the educational system. The participants in this study navigated the system by (a) maintaining the status quo, (b) resistance, and (c) assimilation.

Maintaining the Status Quo

Education is viewed as a place to preserve the status quo and social stratification (Cammarota & Romero, 2006; Espinoza-Herold, 2003; Quiroz, 2001). For Mexican Americans, this constitutes a culture of silence (Freire, 2008; Holling & Rodriguez, 2006). As a result, Mexican Americans, who are an oppressed group, discover that they are unable to exist fully as who they are. As the participants reflected on their high school experiences, they recalled how their school attempted to shape their identity to conform to the status quo. Teresa, with an inflated “oh” shared:

On our volleyball team we had a group of girls [Mexican American] who were awesome volleyball players, but even in their senior year they were on the junior

varsity team to make way for freshmen [White]. So when I asked them, they were like 'that's the way it is!'

Teresa realized that for the Mexican American female volleyball players to continue to play volleyball, "They just didn't make any waves." Yet, Teresa also realized she did not "have any power." Moreover, did she want to "make any waves" and risk being expelled or suspended from school like other Mexican American females who made "waves".

Margarita, who went through high school during the time of desegregation, in an indignant tone stressed, "Now remember, they [students of color] had to get up at 6:15 in the morning to get on the bus and ride the bus all the way across town." This led Margarita to explain further,

Now a White girl, in fact one of the cheerleaders, came to school every morning into the A parking lot [staff parking] and she had her head full of hot rollers and she was allowed to leave those hot rollers in until her very first class!

Margarita added, with an indignant tone and her hands on the table, students of color were not "allowed to cross the threshold of the school without proper attire." Thus, if they did not want to face the consequences, they abided by the dress code in place.

Carmela, with a wholehearted laugh commented, "I'm always happy, roll with the punches, kind of funny, goofy, and so I got along pretty well in school for the most part." Carmela added, "I wanted to make the teachers happy and so I played nice and went along with the status quo pretty well. So I didn't really make any waves." Carmela witnessed another Mexican American student who struggled to fit into the school

environment. Eventually “it didn’t work well for her” and she dropped out. With a sigh of resignation, she noted that speaking out did not get her anywhere.

Teresa, Margarita, and Carmela were visibly upset at what they witnessed in their respective high schools. However, they were unable to confront a system that was oppressing their Mexican American peers. Consequently, they, as Mexican American students in high school, had to learn how to “read” their world by understanding the social constructs that limited them while attending school.

High school Mexican American students who may have some critique of the oppressive conditions do not always openly question the systems of oppression (Matsuda, 1989). According to Solórzano and Bernal (2001), these types of students offer “Band-Aids” to care for the symptoms of the problems rather than deal with the causes of the problem (p. 318). In the case of Teresa and Margarita, neither challenged the institutional practices, questioned the relevancy of the policies, or examined any other factors that contributed to the oppression of their Mexican American peers. Thus, they continued to unconsciously maintain the status quo.

Resistance

According to Yosso (2005), successful navigation factors help Mexican Americans progress through the educational system so that they may succeed (Espinoza-Herold, 2003; Holling & Rodriguez, 2006). Critical Race Theory contends, “resistance among students of color is political, collective, conscious, and motivated” (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 320).

Teresa exclaimed, wide-eyed,

My dad taught us if someone puts a roadblock in your way just find a way around it. Don't quit, get out of the way, don't make waves, do it a different way. I definitely think we accepted them [racism] as that's the way things are. And probably my dad said, 'That's the way things are.'

Francisca in a quiet tone shared,

My government teacher . . . I don't know she just wanted perfection for everything, for one, but she expected it more from some students [Mexican Americans] than she did others [White students]. I would just do my papers, and do my homework, and do my reading, and wouldn't contribute anything to the [classroom] discussions.

Teresa and Francisca internally rationalized they were not going to let the attitudes of their teachers influence their sense of belonging by making excuses for their teachers.

Mexican Americans draw on various navigational skills to assist them to maneuver through the structures of inequality in high school. For instance, Japanese in internment camps used their navigation skills and resisted racism by maintaining and nurturing their various forms of culture (Fernandez, 2002; Yosso, 2005). Solórzano and Bernal (2001) note that resistance may include self-defeating or conformist strategies, which feeds into the notion of subordination.

Students of color regularly find themselves at the margins so they know more about being at the margins as a site of domination and less as a site of resistance (Baez, 2000; Holling & Rodriguez, 2006; hooks, 1994; Woods, 1994). However, some Mexican Americans have begun to view the margins as a place of “nonconformity”— as a

location of radical openness and the possibility from which to share their experiences as demonstrated by Teresa and Francisca.

Assimilation Into White Culture

A suggestion by the cultural deficit majoritarian view is that in order for students of color to be academically successful they need to assimilate. In other words, the argument is that if students of color assimilate to the White middle class culture they will succeed in school and in life (Espinoza & Harris, 1997; Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007; Solórzano & Yosso, 2003). Methods of assimilation include learning English at the expense of losing Spanish by cutting family and community ties (Nichols, White, & Price, 2006; Woodson, 1933). Thus, students of color are encouraged to adopt majoritarian social norms (Delgado, 1991) and abandon their own.

Teresa said with pride “All of my grandfather’s children went to school and graduated high school.” However,

My dad saw his older brothers and sisters be [pause] treated poorly [in school] because they were Spanish speakers. So we were, so my dad, was for assimilation, that is you cut out everything else, you never identified as Mexican American, Tejano, Chicano, it didn’t matter!

As a result, the English language was “engrained in the house,” Teresa’s home. She credits her family with trying to protect them from what they had experienced.

Margarita, leaning forward in a soft voice stated,

I was encouraged by my mother, specifically encouraged, ‘do not speak Spanish at school, and do not tell people you are Mexican American. But if some say ‘oh,

you look Italian or you look Spanish' to just go along with it, not to contradict them and say 'No, I'm Mexican American.' It was not cool to be a minority. Margarita explained that her mother "was afraid that I would be discriminated against" in school.

Francisca wrote in her journal,

I was not encouraged to speak Spanish at home. Both my parents were "lucky" in that they learned to speak English before they started school in Texas. I say "lucky" because their relatives and friends who spoke only Spanish were often punished for their inability to speak English. They [parents] did not want us to be treated differently or be placed in special education programs.

As a consequence, Francisca "believes to a certain extent, I was assimilated into the White culture in many ways. I learned early on how to negotiate the 'white system,' which was why I was successful in school."

Teresa, Margarita, and Francisca were products of assimilation. However, they were raised by verbal and nonverbal *consejos* to be strong within a structure of inequality. Thus, Teresa, Margarita, and Francisca learned strategies to navigate through public high school so as to "sustain high levels of achievement, despite the presence of stressful events and conditions that place them at risk of doing poorly at school" (Alva, 1991, p. 19).

Success in education is measured by acquisition of the culture of Whites. As a result, students of color struggle to maintain their identity while succeeding academically. The parents of Teresa, Margarita, and Francisca were not only teaching their daughters the importance of an education but also how to obtain it. Through conscious instruction,

they taught their daughters to engage in behaviors to help them navigate an educational system that did not value them for who they were. Teresa, Margarita, Francisca, Carmela, and Guadalupe learned from observation and their parents how to navigate an inequitable system. Through their conscious behavior, these women learned to face the inequalities they experienced due to their race and gender.

Participants' driving force in navigating the system was to succeed in high school and in the process "prove" others wrong. *Proving them wrong* appears to be a process in which students "(a) confront the negative portrayals and ideas, (b) are motivated by these negative images and ideas, and (c) are driven to navigate through the educational system for themselves" (Yosso, 2000, cited in Solórzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 319).

The main solution for academic failure proposed by cultural deficit majoritarian storytellers is cultural assimilation. They argue that in order for students of color to succeed they should assimilate to the dominant White middle class culture in school and be Americanized. However, to assimilate does not make Mexican American students White nor are they insulated from oppression and racism. So then, why are Mexican American females not accepted for who they are? All the participants were in honors/advanced placement classes and all were awarded academic scholarships as Mexican American females not White females.

Critical Race theorists realize that terms such as at-risk and the resurrection of terms such as disadvantaged are terms that have changed as racism has changed. Thus, it is important to examine why Mexican American females had the need to learn how to navigate an educational system in order to be successful and scrutinize why there is a need for Mexican American females to assimilate.

Summary

Interpretation involves making sense of the data. During this process the researcher stepped back to look at the larger meaning of the situation. The data revealed the participants' lived experiences of racism during their tenure in high school. The findings support the tenets of CRT in relationship to racism. The participants' stories attested that "racism is a permanent component of American life" (Bell, p. 13, 1992). The results in this chapter revealed information on the intersection of race and gender.

Table 4.1 provided descriptive demographics for the five participants and included: (a) self-identification, (b) birthplace, (c) parent(s), (d) bilingual, (e) honor class or advanced placement, (f) gifted, (g) siblings, (h) age, (i) socioeconomic status (self-reported), (j) highest education of siblings (k) birth order, (l) recipient of scholarship during high school, (m) college major (n) academic level, and (o) order for Ph.D.

The personal portrait section familiarized the reader with each participant. The information was collected during interviews, observation, and from participants' reflective journals, checklists, e-mails, and photographs. Background on each participant included self-identification of ethnicity, birthplace, birth order, number of siblings, their high school standing such as being in honors/advanced placement classes, and if they were recipients of scholarships. Additionally, information about whether participants came from a one- or two-parent home and their socioeconomic status was detailed.

The four emerging themes were summarized and related to the research questions. In order of importance the themes were: (a) racism is endemic and pervasive, (b) colorblindness, (c) social justice, and (d) navigating the system. The first theme, racism is endemic and pervasive, revealed a pattern of racism in high school perpetuated by

counselors, educators, and peers of the participants in the study. The second theme that emerged was colorblindness and the effects it had on the participants in high school through tracking, stereotyping, and identity. The third theme that emerged was social justice and the position the participants took in the form of empowering others, being instrumental, and providing equal opportunities. The last theme that emerged was navigating the system and how the participants were able to do so to advance through maintaining the status quo, resistance, and assimilation.

Critical Race Theory was used to analyze and interpret the findings of the research. This was accomplished through the lived realities of the participants in high school. Many stories have been written, however, the stories are not from members of groups whose voices and perspectives have been suppressed, devalued, and seen as abnormal (Delgado, 1989; Harris, 1990a). Rather, they are stories the dominant group has created. These stories provide a shared reality in which the dominant group's position is seen as natural. The counterstories of "others" subvert that reality. For instance, in Civil Rights the majority maintains that the inequality that exists between Whites and their counterparts is due to culture or existing laws, which are not enforced. However, Critical Race Theory argues it is the mindset of the dominant group that justifies the world as it is, i.e., Whites on top and browns and Blacks at the bottom. The cure is to share through storytelling, which shatters and challenges the status quo (Delgado, 1989, 1990; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Taylor, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The participants' narratives constitute their counterstories. For instance, Carmela, "an accepting person," was one of two Mexican American families living in a rural area. She was determined to prove she was capable of

not only graduating from high school but also attending college. Francisca was able to prove she was an “ideal student,” amazing her teachers by accomplishing more than was required. Margarita, “an eccentric intellect,” knew at a young age she would be heading to college, even though she did not fit in at school. Guadalupe, a “fighter,” was the only Mexican American in her honors classes. Yet she was determined to demonstrate she belonged in each and every class. Her teachers told Teresa, “a thinker,” that she was “retarded.” Yet she was determined to succeed and she pushed to be in upper level classes.

The purpose of storytelling by the participants was to resist cultural domination through their personal stories of experienced discrimination. Thus, these counterstories have the potential of hindsight to challenge the majoritarian stories and to validate the voices of Mexican American females’ powerful way of looking at the pervasiveness of racism (Delgado, 1993a; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) in public high school.

Chapter 5 includes a discussion of (a) summary of the study, (b) discussion and interpretation of the findings, (c) conclusions, (d) recommendations for practice, and (e) recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5 - Discussion

Chapter 5 includes a discussion of (a) summary of the study, (b) discussion and interpretation of the findings, (c) conclusions, (d) recommendations for practice, and (e) recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

Many have written stories, however not many are from Mexican American females, whose voice and perspective has been suppressed, devalued, and seen as abnormal (Delgado, 1989; Ruiz, 1998). Critical Race Theory argues it is the mindset of the dominant groups, which justifies the world as it is, that is, Whites on top and browns and Blacks at the bottom. The cure is to share through storytelling, which shatters and challenges the status quo (Delgado, 1989).

This study investigated the intersection of race and gender experienced by Mexican American females in public high schools through their counterstories. The results in Chapter 4 take the form of a narrative from the counterstories shared by the participants. The research questions guided the study and provided the findings through the methodology described in Chapter 3.

The semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to tell their realities and lived experiences in high school through their counterstories (Delgado, 1989, 1990; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Furthermore, the interviews provided a way for the participants to begin the healing process from their experienced oppression due to the

intersection of race and gender (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

The purpose of this multiple case qualitative study was to investigate the intersection of perceived racism due to race and gender by five Mexican American females, currently doctoral students in same doctoral program in human sciences at Midwestern University, who attended public high school in the United States, using Critical Race Theory as the theoretical framework for analysis and interpretation. The context of this research was from the school experiences expressed through the participants' interviews, reflective journals, which included their perceptions and recollections of high school, photographs of them in high school, and electronic mail to clarify data.

This study was a qualitative multiple participant case study, because the area to be investigated determines the inquiry method, (Polkinghorne, 2005), using interviews, reflection journals, photographs, and electronic mail to gather data. Multiple case studies according to Yin (1981a), allow a researcher to draw conclusions from groups of cases. Thus, the five cases collectively strengthen the results and increase confidence in the study (Tellis, 1997).

The central focus of this multiple qualitative case study research was the perceived racism experienced by Mexican American females. According to Polkinghorne (2005), "A primary purpose of qualitative research is to describe and clarify experience as it is lived and constituted in awareness" (p. 138). Thus, qualitative research allowed the researcher to investigate the lived experiences of the participants (Golafshani, 2003).

Critical Race Theory provided the framework for analysis and interpretation to explore the intersection of race and gender.

Participant selection criteria was based on convenience and purposeful criterion sampling, a subgroup whose experiences are likely to be the same (Polkinghorn, 2005): (a) public high school graduates of the United States, (b) Mexican American females, and (c) doctoral students. To obtain participants for this qualitative multiple participant case study, the researcher sought guidance from the principal investigator to help identify potential participants. In addition, the process involved obtaining permission from the university administrators to contact perspective participants.

Five potential participants were identified for the study. The researcher approached the participants, explaining the purpose of the investigation. All five potential participants agreed to be part of the study. The interview questions were sent to the participants and participants kept a reflective journal to consider interview questions before meeting with the researcher. Participants also were asked to share artifacts related to high school. Interviews were scheduled at convenient times and locations. The interviews were audiorecorded. The audiotapes were then transcribed and sent to participants to member check for accuracy. The participants had the option of omitting any information shared. Participants were all from two-parent homes and self-identified themselves as low or lower socioeconomic class. One participant out of five considered herself bilingual. Two participants were the youngest in their family, two were in the middle of their family, and one was the oldest. All participants were recipients of scholarships during high school to continue with their post-secondary education.

The data analysis spiral (Creswell, 2007) was used to analyze the data. The data were collected first and then organized into manageable files. Second, the transcripts were read several times, to make sense of the whole before breaking into initial codes. Third, themes were developed through the use of coding and categorizing. Finally, the data were presented in a matrix.

The findings are presented in Chapter 4. Following are the discussion and interpretation of the findings, conclusions, recommendations for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion and Interpretation of The Findings

Few studies in education include Mexican American females. According to CRT scholars (Harris, 1990a; King, 1988; Matsuda, 1991; Montoya, 1994), until recently there was no discourse in the literature that established the validity of double jeopardy. It is this lack of research that led to the invisibility of Mexican American women in this Black/White binary society (Bowman, 2001; Correa, 2010; Martinez, 2001; Perea, 1997; 2000; San Miguel, 2005; Simien, 2007; Smith & Anderson, 2005; Valdes, 1997).

The assumption of the dominant society in reference to Mexican American women is that White is natural and normal (Harris, 1990a; hooks, 1993; Shah, 2004). Further, the intersection of race and gender has not been investigated fully (Crenshaw, 1993; Caruthers, Thompson, & Eubanks, 2004; Davalos, Chavez, & Guardiola, 1999). Historically, the work of scholars of color has not been taken seriously until the work is validated by White scholars (Holling & Rodriguez, 2006; hooks, 1993; Shah, 2004; Woodson, 1933). Moreover, the few studies that include Mexican American females focus on dropouts and emphasize at risk factors such as gender, race, socioeconomic

status, and language (Alva & de los Reyes, 1999). As a consequence, the gaps in the empirical literature are caused in part by the shortage of research on Mexican American women and the propensity toward examining Mexican American women from the deficit perspective.

The lack of discussions on Mexican American females continues to perpetuate and marginalize Mexican American women's experiences in a society that sees race as Black or White (Perea, 1997, 2000; Valdes, 1997). Thus, Mexican American females have been obscured, misrepresented, or omitted from the literature when race or gender is viewed separately and not as intersecting with each other (Barlett, 1990; Espin 1997; hooks, 1984). This denies an important difference as the basis for oppression due to the intersection of race and gender. It is, therefore, critical to view the intersectionality of race and gender (Correa, 2010; King, 1988; Simoniello, 1981).

Racism is Endemic and Pervasive

The study revealed several factors related to the participants' perceptions of racism due to the intersection of race and gender. Participant's responses expressed their experiences of racism and maltreatment from: (a) counselors, (b) educators, and (c) peers.

Counselors

Participants shared their lived experiences with racism as Mexican American women. Initially, experiences of racism were downplayed by the participants. In other words, the participants portrayed racism as "no big deal." However, with probing, the researcher discovered racism existed in their high school experiences and they became anxious and eager as they contemplated these experiences. Oppression, i.e., "absence of

choices,” is an accurate term to describe what the participants experienced (hooks, 1984, p. 5). When Mexican American woman do not have choices, they are discriminated against. In other words, oppression is exposed in prejudices and the cruel abuse of power by the oppressor(s) (Castagno & Lee, 2007; Jones & Fuller, 2003; Matsuda, 1989; Simoniello, 1981; Vaught, 2008). There are a variety of ways to oppress individuals. One way mentioned by the participants was that opportunities were withheld by their counselors, e.g., gifted program.

Another form of oppression is disguised as excuses or ignorance. For instance, one participant “was not selected to be in the honor society even though . . . grades were as high as everyone else. There were a certain number of slots . . . one particular girl [White] was picked” (Carmela). Participants were aware that counselors “expected so little of us [Mexican Americans]” (Guadalupe) with their “low expectations” (Margarita). Critical Race theorists argue that “knowledge is power, and power is something that people fight to obtain and struggle to avoid giving up” (Delgado 1990, p. 110; Harris, 1990b; Matsuda, 1987). Therefore, rather than strive for social equity, the current educational system exacerbates a preexisting divide. An illusion of fairness exists that masks the system of White domination (Vaught, 2008; Wise, 2008) by educational counselors who have the power to provide Mexican American females with educational opportunities equal to that of White students.

Critical Race Theory recognizes the power of race both as a social construct and as a powerful reality in the lives of people of color. Critical Race theorists (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Matsuda et al., 1993; Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002) recognize and

maintain that low expectations are a form of discrimination students of color face on a regular basis.

Educators

The insidious nature of racism is that it allows the educational system to subtly, or not so subtly, shape the beliefs of educators while continuing to influence adversely the educational experiences of Mexican American students (Bernal, 2002; Lynn et al., 2010; McCarthy, 1993). For example, through the 20th century, the Euro-American social belief systems about Mexican Americans helped support the cultural reasons for their *dejure* and then *defacto* school segregation. Initially, some individuals argued that Mexican American students should be segregated from White students on the basis of the faulty beliefs of genetic and physical inferiority (Bernal, 2002; Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002; Valencia, 2005). The common beliefs held about Mexican Americans shared by many educators is “premised upon political, scientific, and religious theories relying on racial characterizations and stereotypes about people of color that help support a legitimating ideology and specific political action” (Tate, 1997, p. 199).

Many White educators respond to students who are different in predictable ways. For instance, they may isolate the student, ignore the student, or suspend the student based on their gender and race (Kuykendall, 2004; Meeker, Edmonson, & Fisher, 2008; Vaught, 2008). Teachers have a “most significant” impact on students’ academic success by the way they perceive, value, and work with the students (Coleman, 1966; Darling-Hammond, Banks, Zumwalt, Gomez, Gamoran, Giesdorn, & Finn, 2005; Freire, 2008; Goldhaber & Hansen, 2010). Yet, because of Eurocentrism and White privilege, many individuals continue to believe education in the United States is “meritocratic, unbiased,

and fair” (Donnor, 2005; Bernal, 2002, p. 120). Consequently, some educators impose a negative effect on students. For instance, although all the participants in this study were in advanced courses, they experienced feelings of not belonging as shared by Francisca:

Like most young people, I could tell that she [White educator] did not think I was capable of performing at the same level as my peers. The better I did the assignments and reading, the harder she graded next time.

Mexican American women experience gender discrimination, as do women of all races. However, Mexican American women and women of color experience an additional form of oppression that makes their experiences “qualitatively different”—because of race (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1241; Harris, 1990a; Williams, 1989).

Consequently, Mexican American women cannot be placed neatly into a single category of race or gender—they experience both simultaneously. The result is the experiences cannot be attributed to only race or gender. This simultaneously represents intersectionality and the relationship between race and gender (Garcia, 1989; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2008).

Guadalupe, in a slow and deliberate tone shared what she thought about her experiences in comparison to her White female peers as, “I don’t know. I don’t think so.” She added, “Latinas are . . . supposed to amount to nothing I sensed . . . I was a failure and I wasn’t going to amount to anything.”

A problematic consequence arises when there is a tendency to analyze and treat race and gender as “exclusive categories of experience” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139) or “separate categories” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1278). Racism is foundational to public education thereby preventing a majority of educators from understanding not only the

effects of racism, but double jeopardy as well. Schools and educators limit the experiences of Mexican American women by viewing them in terms of either race or gender (Crenshaw, 1991; Vaught, 2008). This parallels and represents the participants' experience in this research.

Peers

Students who attend public schools experience an increasing diverse population. Consequently, students are not attending schools along divisions that are either segregated or integrated along Black/White lines, but have a diverse student body, inclusive of Mexican American students. As the diversity of the student body in schools has changed, so too have the traditional forms of racism manifested in their school experiences. However, research on experiences of discrimination in the school setting has focused almost exclusively on the White and Black dichotomy (Anderson, 2007; Bowman, 2001; Espinoza & Harris, 1997; Perea, 1997; Tatum, 1997).

By the age of six, virtually everyone is aware of a variety of cultural stereotypes (Aronson, 2004). Nevertheless, peers are not considered typically as a source of racism in education. During the interviews, participants shared their painful experiences with racism at school perpetrated by their White peers. Acts of racism may be automatic, verbal assaults such as, "bastard kids," "dirty Mexican Americans," and "no good" (Carmela), or subtle, as in the case of Francisca and Teresa, who were not invited to "hang out with them [Whites] to parties or anything like that." Yet, many White students will deny initially any personal prejudices and not recognize the impact of racism in the lives of their peers of color. Their failure to understand these acts underscores that Whites seldom notice acts of blatant or subtle racism, while minority [Mexican

Americans] people experience them daily (Delgado, 1988; Matsuda, 1987).

Consequently, White students hesitate to acknowledge their personal responsibility in acts of racism towards their peers of color (Tatum, 1997). Few students, regardless of their race, have a desire to be targets of racism, rather, they share a desire to be recognized as individuals (Aronson, 2004; Bernal, 2002; Montoya, 1994). Margarita recalled in a low and calm tone how some of her White peers were not allowed to play with her and being told, “that I was uppity, and that I acted like I was better than them, and that it was not natural for wetbacks to have more money than White people.”

Critical Race Theory recognizes that racism has no real meaning until it is acknowledged (Matusdua et al., 1993). This includes the peers with whom Mexican American students often are engaged. In the midst of the demographic changes being experienced in public education, it is essential to go beyond the superficial explanations of racism experienced by Mexican American students by their White peers (Perea, 1997).

Colorblindness

Obstacles encountered by students may be due to being part of a group or having certain physical characteristics. However, obstacles seldom are acknowledged for groups of individuals who are at the intersection of two variables. The following obstacles representing colorblindness were shared by participants that represent the intersection of race and gender: (a) tracking, (b) stereotypes, and (c) identity.

Tracking

Colorblindness involves noticing race then denying it exists through “non-recognition” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Gotanda, 1991, p. 5; Guinier & Torres, 2002). This notion of colorblindness masks what King (1991) calls “*dyconscious racism*”—the

uncritical habit of White privilege that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given (p. 135). Critical Race Theory challenges the traditional claims of colorblindness, which are viewed as a camouflage for the self-interest, power, and privilege of the dominant group. Moreover, colorblindness is the pretext that allows education to discount students of color. Consequently, the lens of colorblindness is the most insidious form of racism. Colorblindness and White privilege did not go unnoticed by the participants who recalled:

Anyone with that last name [Hispanic] was put in special education . . . What I realized was that my classmates [those with Hispanic surnames] weren't in the same classes I was . . . they [Mexican Americans] were in remedial [classes].
(Solorzano, 1997; Teresa)

Education sustains a practice of tracking that rebuts social change. The system's rhetoric, which assures the success of anyone who studies hard, is refuted by educational authors and researchers who contend the U.S. system is designed to replicate social class (Darder, Torres, & Gutierrez, 1997; Espin, 1997; Espinoza-Herold, 2003; hooks, 1984; Lindsey et al., 2003; Oakes, 1990; Oakes & Saunders, 2008). For example, the participants observed they continued to be in "the vocational track. They were going to cosmetology or food serve prep or we had a body shop in the high school" (Teresa). Though all the participants in the study were in upper level classes, their memories of high school reflect how tracking practices have racial, ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic class biases.

Tracking is at the heart of educational stratification and inequality. However, many educators believe that achievement is due to intelligence. Some educators see

tracking as regrettable, but necessary, to obtain the highest return on education. Other educators believe there is a correlation between a student's race and socioeconomic status, but maintain it is not a concern for the school to be involved (*Harvard Law Review*, 1989; Kozol, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Oakes, 1990; Oakes & Saunders, 2008). Thus, educators contend it is the students' fault when they fail (Espinoza-Herold, 2003). As a result "It was very, very rare for a Mexican American to get into an advanced class. The other kids [students of color] were in the lowest track. I mean even different parts of the building" (Margarita). Like many other Mexican American students, the participants in this study observed how their peers were steered frequently into technical programs due to their teachers' perceived racial inferiority of them (NWLC & MALDEF, 2009; Vaught, 2008).

Tracking is one of the most subtle forms of social reproduction (Beilke, 2005). Tracking has referred historically to the practice of grouping together students by their perceived ability. These tracking practices include placement influenced by students' race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Futrell & Gomez, 2008; *Harvard Law Review*, 1989; Kozol, 1991; Oakes, 1990; Oakes & Saunders, 2008). Though the participants in the study were in honors/advanced courses, status quo beliefs echo "Some Mexicans are very bright, . . . you can't compare their brightest with the average white children. They are an inferior race" (Bowman, 2001; Haney-Lopez, 2000a, p. 376).

At the turn of the century, Woodson (1933) contended that racism was deeply embedded in education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Prins, 2007). The reflection of White privilege, often invisible to Whites, means that Mexican American women will continue to be demonized for their group failure.

The process of tracking Mexican American students into lower levels begins in elementary school and continues into secondary school (Ladson-Billings, 2009; NWLC & MALDEF, 2009). This type of segregation leaves students feeling betrayed, alienated, and as “outsiders within” an educational system, which views Mexican American students as inferior (Collins, 1986, p. 14; Espinoza & Harris, 1997; Fine, Bloom, Burn, Chajet, Guishard, Payne, Perkins-Munn, & Torre, 2005).

Stereotypes

Ninety percent of U.S. public school teachers are White middle class teachers and received their teaching preparation at predominantly White universities (Castro, 2010; Gay, Dingus, & Jackson, 2003; Howard, 2007; Sprott, 2009). As a consequence, many White educators have not acquired the background to prepare them for the growing diversity of Mexican American students (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2005). In early colonial periods, racial inequalities were clear to those at the margins and is substantiated by a racist educational history (Matsuda et al., 1993; Spring, 2001; Watkins, 2001). Today, one way to draw attention to the disparities is by examining the current educational system in which academic underachievement has been documented for Mexican American students (Alva, 1991; Jones & Fuller, 2003; NWLC & MALDEF, 2009; Nicholas, White & Price, 2006; Oakes, 1990; Solórzano, et al., 2005; Spring, 2001).

In education, Chicanas/Chicanos, and I also add Mexicans Americans, have been viewed as culturally deficient and characterized as “ignorant, backward, unclean, unambitious, and abnormal” (Bernal, 2002, p. 112). This deficit thinking promotes cultural stereotypes about Mexican American students. Additionally, stereotypes have

been shown to have a powerful effect on the poor academic achievement of Mexican American women (Aronson, 2004; Steele, 2009). This belief continues in the 21st century as demonstrated by the participants in this study whose views parallel the Mexican American females in the NWLC & MALDEF study (2009), “They all [educators and white peers] assume immigrants are lazy and uneducated. And when they look at someone like me, that’s what they assume” (Teresa) and “They [White educators] made me angry . . . I wanted to be successful just to spite her [White educators]. Research indicates Latinas [Mexican Americans] are influenced by societal expectations, often based on stereotypes of them as underachievers (Castro, 2010; Espinoza-Herold, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2006; NWLC & MALDEF, 2009; Steele, 2009).

Schools in the United States never were designed to meet the needs of Mexican American students (Spring, 2001; Watkins, 2001; Wise, 2008). Rather, they were and remain for the most part based on White middle class norms and expectations, which are valued as official knowledge and truth (Belenky et al., 1986; Caruthers, Thompson, & Eubanks, 2004; Collins, 1986). Thus, stereotypes are a way for education to cope or deal with Mexican American students, i.e., uneducated, illegal, stupid, troublemakers, dirty, irresponsible (Aronson, 2004; Jones & Fuller, 2003, p. 23; Solorzano, 1997, p. 9; Vaught, 2008).

Stereotypes that surface are overgeneralizations about a group of people. Stereotypes have not changed much since 1846 when Rufus B. Sage (1956) (cited in Perea, 2000) expressed the common view of Mexicans, when he stated “There are no people on the continent of America, whether civilized or uncivilized . . . more miserable in condition or despicable in morals than the mongrel race [Mexicans]” (p. 348). Thus,

as Mexican Americans “you will be judged by your skin color, your names, your accents. They [Whites] will see you [Mexican Americans] as ugly, lazy, dumb, and dirty” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2005, p. 10; Healey, 2007; Jones & Fuller, 2003; Montoya, 1994, p. 4). On some level, Mexican American students may not understand that such stereotypes are not normal. However, they realize that “they [Whites] . . . [are] watching us [Mexican Americans]” (Teresa). Thus, experiences with stereotypes do not go unnoticed or unfelt by those they wound.

Stereotypes are believed and endorsed by half of White Americans about Latinos and Blacks (Aronson, 2004). Consequently, when students are compared who have similar income and education there is still a significant gap. Hence, if it is not intelligence or skills, what else could account for the underperformance among the students? According to Aronson (2004), “Our hunch was that this ‘something else’ was rooted in the cultural stereotypes” (p. 15). There is no doubt that stereotypes sustain entrenched beliefs and inflict an immeasurable threat to the academic success of Mexican American students in education (Steele, 2009).

Identity

The identity of a woman is based on White college-educated females (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Perkins, 1983; Welter, 1966). The implication is that Mexican American women are the “other” (Collins, 1986; *Harvard Law Review*, 1989; Huber et al., 2006; Ruiz, 1998; Taylor, 2009a, b) who continue to reside at the margins (Castañeda, 1990). As a result, racial categories often are more severe than stereotyping actions because membership in racial minority group cannot be selected or altered. Thus,

racial categories are “one of the most fruitful causes of human misery. Poverty can be eliminated — but skin color cannot” (Delgado, 1993a, p. 90).

According to Carter and Goodwin (1994), a person’s race is perceived as their identity. Thus, Critical Race Theory goes beyond the idea that race is dichotomous based on social constructions or biological factors. Race is recognized as central to people’s lives (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 1991; Delgado, 1995; Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002). For instance, there is a distinction between the claims, “I am Black [Mexican American]” and “I am a person who happens to be Black [Mexican American]” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1299). According to Crenshaw (1991), “I am Black [Mexican American]” is linked to positive self-identification. However, the individual who states, “I am a person who happens to be Black [Mexican American]” (p. 1299), achieves self-identification by searching dismissal of the imposed racial category. In this study, all the participants stated, “I am Mexican American,” which indicates all the participants in this study have a positive self-identity (Crenshaw, 1991; Montano & Burstein, 2006; Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007).

The participants did not attribute their self-identification as Mexican Americans to anything specific. However, according to Carmela, “I was aware of it from the time I was little that I was Mexican American.” Research suggests children between five and eight years of age begin to have a concept their race is fixed and will not change (Tatum, 1997). After the age of eight, children begin to internalize and act on society’s expectations.

Thus, the general category of women is exclusionary because it treats the experiences of Mexican American women as those of the White middle-class women

(Barlett, 1990; Belenky et al., 1986; Frankenberg, 1993; Gilligan, 1982; McCall, 2005; Vera & de los Santos, 2005; Welter, 1966). This cannot be corrected by adding an analysis of race to gender because Mexican American women are “simultaneously situated within at least two groups that are subjected to . . . subordination . . . that is, gender discrimination or race discrimination (Barlett, 1990; Crenshaw, 1993, p. 114; Garcia, 1989; hooks, 1984; Tate, 1997). For this reason, race cannot be analyzed separately from gender. To do so would dismiss the participants’ identity “as unreliable, untrustworthy . . . powerless” and continue to “subordinate [Mexican American women] to White people” (Williams, 1987, p. 407)

Mexican American students have been subjected to injustices and prejudices, pushed into positions of marginality, and disempowered by U.S. Anglocentric society (Matsuda, 1987; Solórzano, Villalpando & Oseguera, 2005; Valdes, 1997; Watkins, 2001). The participants in this study recalled how their education succeeded in shaping their identity towards a uniform standard related to the assumption that White is the norm, natural, and correct (Barajas & Ronnkvist, 2007; Espinoza-Herold, 2003; hooks, 1993; Shah, 2004). The majority of the participants indicated schools tended to preserve the status quo. As a result, the participants were left with a longing for “an ethnic identity” (Margarita).

I was not encouraged to speak Spanish at home. Both my parents were “lucky” in that they learned to speak English . . . I say “lucky” because their relatives and friends who spoke only Spanish were often punished for their inability to speak English. They were also put into remedial classes. (Francisca)

The analysis of identity used by education does not recognize individuals' intersectionality of race and gender. To restate, "One cannot help but question the powerful role the school plays" (Quiroz, 2001, p. 342). To ignore the identity of Mexican American women "is to turn our backs on the American promise of fairness and equality of opportunity" (Robbins, Ammerman, & Rodriguez, 2009, p. 1).

Social Justice

Participants' determination to complete high school and to continue on to higher education were represented by: (a) social justice, and (b) navigating the system. Social justice consisted of (a) their desire to empower all students of color in the future, (b) advocate for all students of color, and (c) provide equal opportunities for all students of color. The second response by the participants for navigating the system included: (a) maintaining the status quo, (b) resistance, and (c) assimilation into the White culture. Social justice is addressed first, followed by navigating the system.

Empower All Students of Color

A basic assumption by society that the United States is a just society for all students is one that can be challenged in education (Smith-Maddox & Solorzano, 2002; Tatum, 1997). It is important to note that a historical analysis is required to provide a context for understanding the origins of injustice in today's society (Bernal, 2002; Fernandez, 2007; McCarthy, 1993; Tate, 1997; Woodson, 1933). One goal of CRT is the struggle for social justice in education and is part of the broader goal of ending other forms of subordination such as race, gender, class, and sexual orientation (Matsuda, 1991; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). However, this goal has little meaning unless framed historically. For the participants that graduated from high school, their

commitment for social justice included “empowering of underrepresented minority groups” (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 313; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). As a consequence, participants’ desire to make a difference by helping students of color reach their goals is not surprising (Carmela; hooks, 1994; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001)

Historically, people of color have gravitated towards using their social capital to attain justice for others (Yosso, 2005). Similarly, Mexican Americans realize that educational institutions operate in contradictory ways to oppress and marginalize while at the same time offering the potential to liberate and empower students (Freire, 2008). The participants in this study recognized they need to empower other students of color to resist the multiple layers of oppression and discrimination encountered in education (Matsuda, 1989). Therefore, the participants in this study were similar to the students in Bernal’s (2002) study, which found that Chicana/Chicano students had a higher interest in pursuing careers to help others.

Advocate for All Students of Color

The social movement is attractive to minorities because they realize social justice is manipulated and legitimized to serve the existing misdistributions based on power and race (Matsuda, 1987; Solorzano, 1997). Thus, in the past and present there have been individuals who were outsiders who committed themselves to social justice for all (Collins, 1986; hooks, 1994). These individuals experienced life as a non-White person in America and were subjected to racism and oppression. The participants used their experiences to reveal the racism underlying educational practices they experienced related to tracking, special education, and extracurricular activities.

The overall goal of CRT is for social justice to end “all forms of racial, gender, language, generation status, and class subordination” (Solórzano et al., 2005, p. 275), in addition to eliminating discrimination to end all forms of oppression for people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Thus, progress is measured through social transformation. In the United States, it is impossible to appreciate fully the significance of the intersection of race and gender without looking at the relationship between Mexican American women and education. For instance, Hispanic women are less educated than Non-Hispanic woman (PEW, 2009). The latest data shows that 41% of Hispanic (Mexican American) females do not graduate on time with a diploma (NWLC & MALDEF, 2009).

Thus, it was not unusual that the response from the participants was their commitment to advocate for all students. One way the participants wanted to accomplish this was to use their “light-colored skin” to advocate for justice” (Margarita) like the participants in the study of Solórzano and Bernal (2001). They surmise that Whites “will listen to another person that they perceive as White” (Margarita) when it comes to advocating for students of color. This is a way participants can give back via educating current and future teachers (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001).

Provide Equal Opportunities for All Students of Color

Providing equal opportunities for all students regardless of color often is motivated by a need for social justice (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Thus, there exists a need to change the current educational system, which seeks to find a relationship between race and low academic achievement among students of color (Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Zarate, Bhimji, & Reese, 2005). According to Baxter-Magolda (2004), knowledge is the

core of personal epistemology, thus, beliefs about self, learning, and classroom instruction are all part of personal epistemology (Matsuda, 1989). As a result, it was not unusual for the participants to share a desire to provide equal opportunities for all students of color.

Racial inequality often is not regarded as legitimate by a large segment of Whites. In addition, local control of education may result in preserving superior educational opportunities for Whites at the expense of others, including Mexican Americans (Bell, 1980; Kuykendall, 2004; Watkins, 2001). During the interviews, the participants were mindful of the opportunities denied to other Mexican American females. Today the participants, who received support and encouragement from their mothers, like the participants in Simoniello's (1981) study, also want to provide support and encouragement. Thus, as Carmela shared, "I've had someone in my life, who that if it wouldn't have been for them, I would not be here today. One of them of course would be my mom." This, in turn, gave them the confidence to pursue "opportunities" (Carmela). Margarita recalled thinking "I just don't know if I'm going to be able to do this."

Social justice may be a cause for many people. What is missing are the experiences of Mexican American females, which are different due to the intersection of race and gender (Bernal, 2002; Williams, 1987). Critical Race Theory insists on exploring racism and intersectionality, which explains the inherent connection between race and gender. This exposes the misconceptions about meritocracy as well as the hegemonic control of the social arrangements in education (Bernal, 2002; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Donnor, 2005; Matsuda, 1987; Parker & Lynn, 2002; Watkins, 2001), thereby giving voice to Mexican American females in their advancement of social justice.

Navigating the System

Participants stated that in order to survive daily and to cope with barriers, they had to navigate the educational system by: (a) maintaining the status quo, (b) resistance, and (c) assimilating into White culture.

Maintaining the Status Quo

Bell (1992) contends that certain rules exist in society that dictate everyday behavior. He suggests the rules of society allow individuals to understand better the societal structures. However, the price of this knowledge is the frustration that comes with knowing nothing can prevent racism (Bell, 1992; Tate, 1994). The result is that the knowledge, language, practices, and values of one group are dominant and others are subordinated (Bomer, Dworin, May & Semingson, 2008; Matsuda, 1987; Tozer, 2000).

The participants in this study were considered “ideal students” (Francisca). They were quiet and behaved appropriately according to the White norm. Subconsciously, they realized silence was expected of them. This did not make it easy for them to realize that “you couldn’t express yourself because nothing was going to get done, and you knew that you just ignored things and you knew to behave . . . because you’re Mexican” (Teresa). Thus, as Carmela puts it “I played nice and went along with the status quo pretty well. So, I didn’t make any waves.” To actually voice the inequalities of education was taboo (Montoya, 1994). For such students, feeling alienated and remaining silent are common experiences (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Harris, 1990a; Williams, 1989).

The participants learned to read their environment and to understand the social constructs that limited them to challenge the system that oppressed them (Espinoza-

Herold, 2003, Freire & Macedo, 1987). Even though high school students may have some analysis of their oppressive conditions, they must rely on the policies, educators, and other factors, which contributed to their oppression, to save them.

The dominant society operates on the belief of racial differences based on stereotypes. These inaccurate conceptions perpetuate the idea that Mexican American females are inferior, which further marginalizes their status. As a result, the presumed intellectual hierarchies among racial groups are reinforced. Thus, the rules of society for Mexican American females are that only the voices of the privileged are heard. Consequently, Mexican American females have to be “so busy doing what he[she] is told to do that he[she] has not stopped long enough to think about the meaning of these things” (Matsuda, 1987; Woodson, 1933, p. 61).

Resistance

In America, the assumption is that either an individual is a member of the “majority” or the “minority” (Bowman, 2001, p. 1752). For Mexican American students, the status of “minority” is an inheritance handed down to them historically. Furthermore, with this marginalized status comes the sense of keeping one’s “place” (Woodson, 1933, p. 6). Consequently, the social constructs of race, gender, and historical oppression are resisted by Mexican American women as a result of the injustices they experience (Matsuda, 1987; Montano & Burstein, 2006; Ruiz, 1998). For instance, all the participants refused to let the inequities of the educational keep them from participating in advanced classes and honor courses while in high school. As a result, they were able to challenge, “assumptions and stereotypes” (Carmela) held about Mexican American women, i.e., “dumb, stupid, retarded” (Teresa).

Colorblindness masks the systems of domination in education that work against Mexican American females by retaining a view of neutrality. Moreover, it distorts the reality of overt forms of racism. This was apparent in the high schools attended by the participants, who were regulated by educators, counselors, and peers to maintain their minority status to stay in their “proper place” (Woodson, 1933, p. xiii) by accepting their position as “that’s the way things are” (Teresa). They were relegated to the margins by exclusion (Crenshaw, 1991). As a result, there exists an internal guide on ways of knowing and understanding for Mexican American females, which are shaped by experiences (Bernal, 2002; Plummer & Slane, 1996). Consequently, the behavior of students of color is motivated by the perception of their “lower racial class status” (Huber, Johnson, & Kohli, 2006, p. 201).

Attending an institution of any kind always carries a side effect with it (Harris, 1990b; Woodson, 1933). In education, there are certain behaviors required for certain students, dependent on race. For Mexican American students, their behavior is unconsciously motivated by who they are (Plummer & Slane, 1996). For example, Teresa was reprimanded for asking for help on an assignment from a teacher. In addition, Teresa witnessed Mexican American females suspended for speaking out of turn. Freire (2008) suggested oppression is best understood from the vantage point of the oppressed. As such, Mexican American women “speak with a special voice to which we should listen” (Matsuda, 1987, p. 324) when they discuss how the current system treats them. Critical Race scholars have refused to ignore the different layers of subordination in education, which operates in ways to oppress and marginalize students of color.

Conduct that conforms to the dominant norm is another layer of subordination that challenges the claims of an equitable education for all students regardless of race.

Assimilating into White Culture

A solution for minorities touted by the cultural deficit majoritarian point of view is assimilation (Espinoza & Harris, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The rationale is that in order to be successful, students should assimilate into the dominant White middle-class. This includes learning English, at the expense of losing Spanish, and cutting family ties (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Valdes, 1997; Woodson, 1933). History is replete with accounts of individuals who lost their Spanish language, accent, or changed their names or did whatever was necessary so as not to be seen as different from the majority (Montoya, 1994). English is the dominant language Mexican American females have adopted (Nichols, White, & Price, 2006). The participants in the study confirmed they were “specifically encouraged, ‘do not speak Spanish at school, and do not tell people you are Mexican American’” (Margarita).

A driving force for the participants to be academically successful was to assimilate to the dominant culture. According to Francisca,

I believe that to a certain extent I was assimilated into the White culture in many ways. One of which, of course, was the loss of my heritage language Spanish . . . I learned early on how to negotiate the “white system,” which was why I was so successful in school.

Assimilation is seen as the process of adaptation to American culture and the cornerstone of American identity (Burdick & Gomez, 2006). For the participants, it was a method of “proving them wrong” (Carmela). *Proving them wrong* appears to be a

process in which students “(a) confront the negative portrayals and ideas [of the dominant group], (b) are motivated by these negative images and ideas, and (c) are driven to navigate through the educational system for themselves” (Yosso, 2000, cited in Solórzano & Bernal, 2001, p. 319).

Conclusions

To better understand the racism experienced by Mexican American women, this study examines the intersection of race and gender (Crenshaw, 1993; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, 2005; Simoniello, 1981; Tate, 1997) in their lives in the context of public education. Critical Race Theory in educational research (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado, 1989; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Matsuda, et al., 1993; Solórzano, 1998; Tate, 1997) suggests that Mexican American women continue to be relegated to the margins through pervasive racism. In addition, it is essential to distinguish double jeopardy in Black feminist research and its CRT counterpart, intersectionality, from the recent discovery of intersectionality in White feminist literature (McCall, 2005; Nash, 2008). Further, White feminists cannot speak about the experiences of Mexican American women because they do not experience racism (Bedolla, 2007; Frankenberg, 1993; Guzman & Valdivia, 2004; Ludvig, 2006).

The results of this research further support the following aspects central to CRT:

- (a) Racism is endemic and pervasive in public education;
- (b) Colorblindness is the notion from which many educational entities operate;
- (c) Social justice is perceived as the solution to ending all forms of racism and oppression and,
- (d) Navigating the system is necessary to learn to be academically successful.

The first finding, racism is endemic and pervasive in public education, was mirrored by the racist actions by counselors, educators, and peers of the participants. All the participants were in honors or advanced classes. Moreover, they were all recipients of prestigious academic scholarships i.e., GATES, Air force Academy, LULAC, GI Forum, to continue their education at post-secondary institutions. However, it is of interest to note none were in the gifted program. Additionally, White educators viewed the participants as failures due to their race and stereotyped their future opportunities based on their gender. Thus, the thinking established within the educational institution is based on the assumption that intellectual differences are based on “genetic inferior[ity]” and institutionalized historical accounts that embedded stereotypes (*Harvard Law Review*, 1989, p. 1322; Kuykendall, 2004; Oakes, 1990). This type of thinking de-emphasizes race without understanding how race and gender affect the underachievement Mexican American females’ experience (Parker & Lynn, 2002; Solórzano, 1997).

The second finding was colorblindness. This was evidenced by the participants’ identity of self, being tracked into vocational programs, and being stereotyped by their educators on the basis of their race and gender. The notion of colorblindness is tied to historical racism by reinforcing and naturalizing the hierarchies established by society based on race and gender. Education perpetuates the inequalities by teaching students self-fulfilling lessons about their place in society (*Harvard Law Review*, 1989; Woodson, 1933), with White considered the norm and Mexican Americans as the “outsiders” (Collins, 1986, p. 15; *Harvard Law Review*, 1989; Huber et al., 2006; Taylor, 2009a, b). Allowing racism to operate through the sanctioned channel of education is designed to

advance the interests of the powerful, dominant class (Barrera, 1997; Collins, 1986, 2000; Taylor, 2009b; Valian, 2005).

The third theme was social justice. The participants' ability to capture the complexities of racism that frequently disempower students of color motivated the participants to empower all students of color, be an instrumental power, and be available to provide equal opportunities to all students of color. The findings indicated that the participants' experiences were compared to the prototype of a woman who is White, middle-class, and European and the prototype of the Black heterosexual male (Bowman, 2001; Espin, 1997; Guiner & Torres, 2002; Hancock, 2007; Harris, 1990b; hooks, 1994; King, 1988; McCall, 2005). This is reflected in the "misconceptions" (Teresa) White people have about Mexican American females as if there is something "wrong" with the way they "speak" and act (Francisca). As such, "those who are 'only interested in race' and those who are 'only interested in gender' take their separate slices of our lives" (Harris, 1990b, p. 589; hooks, 1981; King, 1988), rendering Mexican American women as non-existent (Bowman, 2001; Ong, 2005; Simoniello, 1981).

Finally, the last finding was navigating the system, which was motivated by the participants' need to cope with racism and the barriers they encountered due to their race and gender in their educational journey. The participants "wanted to prove . . . I could do it" (Carmela). This involved the participants confronting the negative stereotypes of Mexican American females. Secondly, participants were self-driven to succeed (Yosso, 2000, cited in Solórzano & Bernal, 2001).

Through the framework of Critical Race Theory, Mexican American females are acknowledged as holders and creators of knowledge that counter dominant Eurocentric

views (Bernal, 2002; Matsuda, 1989; Parker & Lynn, 2002). Moreover, the counterstories of the participants shattered “complacency and challenge[d] the status quo” (Delgado, 1989, p. 2414).

Recommendations For Practice

The counterstories of the Mexican American women in this study raised a number of issues related to racism due to the intersection of race and gender in their public high schools in the United States. The participants shared their experiences, challenges, and system of support while in high school. Their success illuminates why so many of their peers failed to thrive in high school. According to Longeaux and Vasquez (cited in Garcia, 1989), racism experienced by women of color was due to race. It was not until the 1980s that racism was understood to be an incomplete concept if it ignored the intersection of race and gender for women of color (Garcia, 1989; Harris, 1990a; hooks, 1984). Thus, since public high schools are social constructions (Espinoza-Herold, 2003), it is critical to examine them from the viewpoint of racial minorities who are most affected by these constructions: Mexican American females. As a result of this study, recommendations for practice for educators, counselors, and administrators are made.

The first recommendation for practice is verified by the experiences of the participants that racism is pervasive and endemic in public high schools. This is one area all educational stakeholders need to recognize, learn about, and incorporate in their efforts to improve the academic success of all students of color (Huber, Johnson, & Kohli, 2006). This includes critiquing the curriculum, teacher pedagogy, school culture, and stakeholders’ beliefs. The counterstories of the participants indicated educators had deficit views about Mexican American females. The prevailing thought of educators and

counselors was as though Mexican American females lack fundamental qualities essential to their academic success. This was made clear from the educators' perceptions based on stereotypes and lack of knowledge. The school culture should be investigated by asking such questions such as: Is the curriculum culturally relevant? Is the teacher culturally responsive to student needs? Is the classroom culture reflective of the student demographics? And what are the beliefs of the stakeholders in relationship to students of diversity? Addressing and resolving these issues will help to alleviate some of the racism that perpetrates education.

The second recommendation for practice is to rethink the current deficit paradigm based on low socioeconomic status, language, single parent homes, mobility, culture, race, and/or gender for Mexican American females, which may not be an accurate portrayal of every student (Vang, 2005). Rather, educators need to become informed regarding the intersection of race and gender not as isolated variables but as intersecting with one another. Demographic changes in public education can no longer ignore Mexican American females at the intersection of race and gender. However, educators must ensure that the experiences of Mexican American females are not compared to that of the dominant norm of a White middle-class female or that of the ethnic norm of a Black heterosexual male.

The third recommendation for practice is to listen to the counterstories of Mexican American females to gain a better understanding of their experiences. Counterstories are a way of telling one's story at the margins. Counterstories are valuable in exposing and analyzing the experiences of Mexican American females. The counterstories can reveal perceived experiences with and responses to racism. Thus,

mutual learning for both the listener and Mexican American female may occur.

Counterstories told by Mexican American females about perceived racism may assist in the limited and distorted understanding educators have about students of color so that a shift of social power and opportunities for change may begin.

The fourth recommendation is to implement a mentoring program that provides Mexican American females with access to positive role models and support while in high school. There is no questioning the powerful role the schools play in assisting students to achieve their academic goals (Quiroz, 2001; Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007). Yet, in this study none of the participants mentioned a mentor within the school to help guide and assist them.

The fifth recommendation for practice is that public education needs to ensure that all students have equal access to advanced course programs. Enrollment for advanced courses should be available to all Mexican American females. The high schools should implement a data system program that calculates the number of Mexican American females currently enrolled in advanced placement courses. In doing so, the school can identify the underrepresentation of Mexican American females in advanced courses (Solorzano & Ornelas, 2002, 2004).

A final recommendation for practice is for teacher education programs. Although most programs require a multicultural education course, one course in an entire program is insufficient to dislodge deeply embedded stereotypes and dyconscious racism held by a predominately White future teaching force. Pre-service teacher curriculum must infuse multiculturalism in every course of its program to move toward caring, knowledgeable, and ethical teachers for the benefit of all their future students.

Recommendations For Future Research

Currently there exists insufficient research addressing Mexican American females' experiences at the intersection of race and gender and how this perpetuates inequity in their education. Therefore, more qualitative studies are recommended. For future research, a similar study is needed with a larger number of Mexican American females who have graduated from public high schools in the U.S. in order to study their educational experiences at the intersection of race and gender. There exists a need to pursue studies to examine the common constraints in accessing an equitable education shared by Mexican American females.

The second recommendation is to compare the experiences of Mexican American females at the intersection of race and gender to those of White females for whom race is normative. A comparative study will provide a more precise account of the experiences of Mexican American females at the intersection of race and gender. This may be accomplished by doing a mixed methods study. A survey, with revised research questions from this study could be administered. Open-ended questions will add to the study for deeper individual understanding of the intersection of race and gender in concert with interviews.

The third recommendation is to explore the beliefs and practices of White educators in relationship to Mexican American females to understand further how White educators perceive Mexican American females at the intersection of race and gender. This will impact future educational research to continue to explore beliefs and practices embedded in public education.

A fourth recommendation is to investigate further Mexican American females who come from two parent homes to verify if they are as successful as the Mexican American females in this study. A comparative study of Mexican American females with White and other ethnic groups would accomplish this. A survey with modified questions from this study could be administered. This will impact research in U.S. society, where the original White two parent homes grow increasingly less common due to divorce and remarriage. Such research has the potential to provide insight into the impact of being raised in the original two parent family setting versus a divorce or blended family due to divorce and remarriage.

Finally, a qualitative study similar to this one could investigate how Mexican American males' experiences are similar to or different from those of Mexican American females.

As this study has shown, CRT in education questions a range of assumptions upon which schooling rests such as (a) we live in a just society, (b) education is the great equalizer of races, and (c) race is only used as a descriptor (Lynn & Parker, 2006, p. 279). Critical Race scholars in education have transformed the way the intersection of race and gender is understood in the inequality of education. This remains of ongoing significance and importance since Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) suggestion that race was "untheorized" in the field of education (p. 50).

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Appendix A - Interview Protocol

Prior to Interview

The participants will be briefed on the following prior to the study:

1. The purpose of the research
 - I. To share experiences of racism in high school and how participants coped to overcome obstacles of racism
2. The procedures of the research
 - I. Interview primary source of data collection
 - i. Photos
 - ii. Reflective journal
 - iii. Electronic mail
 - II. Member checking
 - i. Participants have opportunity to review transcripts, make additions, and/or modifications to ensure participant said what they meant to say
 - ii. Initial coding of transcripts, reflective journal, electronic mail
 - iii. Analyzed using CRT
3. The risks, if any, and benefits of research
 - I. Risk
 - i. None to participants
 - II. Benefits of research
 - i. Contribution to limited research on Mexican American females in public high school

- ii. Opportunity for educators in public school to view racism through a different lens
- 4. The voluntary decision to withdraw from the research at any time
- 5. The procedures used to identify and protect confidentiality
 - I. Anonymity will be provided to protect confidentiality (Groenewald, 2004, p. 10)

Both researcher and participant sign two copies of the consent form, one for researcher and another one for participant. The participant will be given another copy of the interview questions for reference during the interview.

Conclusion of Interview

At the conclusion of the interview:

- 1. Thank participant
- 2. Schedule second meeting
- 3. Immediately after interview in private place
 - I. Record field notes
 - II. Complete observation check list
 - III. Journal in log, if appropriate
- 5. Listen to participant interview
- 6. Check in with primary researcher to update on progress of study

Appendix B - Interview Questions

Time of Interview: Begin:

Ending time:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee Pseudonym:

Interview Questions Follow:

Background

Tell me about you and your family.

1. Where did you grow up?
2. Please describe and tell me about your immediate family.
3. If you have siblings, please describe them.
4. What were your parents' educational backgrounds?
5. What were your parents' attitudes about education?
6. What do your parents do for a living?

Tell me what your life is like right now (*Belenky et al., 1986*).

1. What do you care about?
2. What do you think about?

Self-Description

1. How would you describe yourself to yourself? (Gilligan, 1982)
2. If you were to tell yourself who you really are, how would you do that?

3. What is your marital status?
4. Please tell me about any children you have.
5. How do you see yourself changing in the future? (Belenky et al., 1986)

Research Question 1

1. How do you define racism?
 - I. To what extent did or did not racism exist in your high school?
 - II. Please provide an example or examples of racism in your high school and specifically any instances of racism you experienced.
 - III. If you reported observing or experiencing racism to any of your teachers, administrators, or peers – or – any teacher, administrator, or peer witnessed it, what did they do about it?

Probe: If no, have you observed or experienced racism at other institutions?

- I. What did you observe or experience?
 - II. Why did you believe it was racism?
2. Were there differences in treatment in high school that you perceived between you and European-American female students? If so, please describe them.
 - I. How did the differences in treatment affect you?
 - II. Was your teacher aware?
 - i. If yes, what or how did s/he handle it?
 - ii. If no, what makes you believe your teacher was not aware?
 - iii. Was the administration aware of any differences in treatment between you and European-American females in your high school?
 - A. If yes: please give some examples.

Probe: If no:

- I. Were all female students treated the same?
- II. If no: which females were treated differently?
- III. Why? How?
- IV. Examples

Research Question 2

- 1. Please describe any obstacles that made it difficult for you while in school.
- 2. What were the obstacles?
- 3. How did you cope or deal with them?

Probe: if no: Did you observe any females who faced obstacles while in high school?

- I. What was/were they?
- II. How did they cope or deal with them?
- 4. Did you face the same challenges as other females in your high school, both Mexican American and European-American?
- 5. What were the challenges?
- 6. How did you overcome the challenges?

Probe: if no: How were your experiences different?

- 7. How did you deal with them?

Research Question 3

- 1. What compelled you to persist and prevail over challenges while in high school to continue with your education?
- 2. What motivates you today to persist as a doctoral student?

I. What are your goals?

II. Educational?

III. Personal?

IV. Career?

Conclusion

Are there any other questions that I should have asked you that would have illuminated the issues in which I am interested? (Belenky et al., 1986).

Thank you for your time, if I need follow-up information, may I contact you?

Appendix C - IRB Approval



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TO: Kay Ann Taylor
Secondary Education
323 Bluemont

Proposal Number: 5122

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair 
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: July 21, 2009

RE: Approval of Proposal Entitled, "Latinas' Perspectives of the Intersection of Racism and Sexism in Public High School: A Critical Race Theory Analysis."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects has reviewed your proposal and has granted full approval. This proposal is **approved for one year from the date of this correspondence, pending "continuing review."**

APPROVAL DATE: July 21, 2009

EXPIRATION DATE: July 21, 2010

Several months prior to the expiration date listed, the IRB will solicit information from you for federally mandated "**continuing review**" of the research. Based on the review, the IRB may approve the activity for another year. **If continuing IRB approval is not granted, or the IRB fails to perform the continuing review before the expiration date noted above, the project will expire and the activity involving human subjects must be terminated on that date. Consequently, it is critical that you are responsive to the IRB request for information for continuing review if you want your project to continue.**

In giving its approval, the Committee has determined that:

- ☒ There is no more than minimal risk to the subjects.
☐ There is greater than minimal risk to the subjects.

This approval applies only to the proposal currently on file as written. Any change or modification affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. All approved proposals are subject to continuing review at least annually, which may include the examination of records connected with the project. Announced post-approval monitoring may be performed during the course of this approval period by URCO staff. Injuries, unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB and / or the URCO.

Appendix D - Audit Trail

Methodological Documentation

August 5, 2009

Sent out email to all participants who were invited to participate in research. The email included an explanation of the study as well as how it will contribute to research. I also mentioned time frame of interviews, and confidentiality. I am attaching a copy of the interview questions for potential participants.

August 5, 2009

Received an email from one participant for interview to take place this Thursday in her office. Her preference is to be audiotaped. I replied and asked her to share her reflective journal if she was comfortable.

August 6, 2009

Participant has replied she is happy to share her story. She has included her schedule so that we may arrange a time that will work for both of us.

A second participant has replied she is happy to be part of my study. She has given me times and days that work best for her. We will meet in my office, since she is moving from one office to another.

August 12, 2009

One participant from August 6, 2009 stated she prefers to meet in the morning first thing in her office. She has indicated she wants to be audiotaped for the interview.

August 21, 2009

Changes recommended by the committee are being made to document.

August 22, 2009

I need to sort through huge amount of data I will read transcripts one day, re-read, another add, read a third day and transcribe the fourth day. I made additional copies of the interview observation. Following Creswell (2007) suggestion to make folders for each participant. And to make electronic folders this will include: the audio interviews on my computer and transcripts, and photographs that participants share.

I have started to stack my research into stacks. Right now I have a stack for research, case studies, and race. I will add this next to my research this weekend. The transcripts can wait until the evening. If this doesn't work I will switch writing with transcribing. I realize I will be modifying but for now I think I need a schedule to keep me on schedule.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Lunch	Read	Read	Read	Read	Transcribe	Transcribe
Evening	Read/ Transcribe	Read/ Transcribe	Read/ Transcribe	Read/ Transcribe	Read/ Transcribe	Read/ Transcribe
					Organize Data	Organize Data

August 22, 2009

Saturday went down to Wichita to interview participant for research.

Filled out observation checklist and wrote field notes on the margins of interview form.

August 23, 2009

The fifth and last potential participant has emailed me and wants to know the day and time for interview. I guess that means it's a go with her.

August 24, 2009

Transcribed interview and listened to participant story. I will make notes as I listen for future reference.

August 26, 2009

Asked participant from August 23rd to keep a reflective journal of her high school experiences to share if she was comfortable during the interview.

September 2, 2009

Reread chapter 1 and made needed changes per Dr. Taylor's recommendations and committee.

September 3, 2009

Participant was interviewed. She talked about her reflective journal. However, she did not volunteer to share when I asked her if I could see it. I guess she was not comfortable sharing the names of individuals she shared and her experiences with them as a Mexican American female.

Listening to two interviews again, using CRT analysis has brought up the issue that racism is alive and well in high school. For instance, an incident between a participant and her counselor should never have happened. Then another participant, though White in appearance, still had to contend with the knowledge that the parents of her peers knew she was Mexican. Consequently, some of her White peers were forbidden to play with her – what a reality at such an early age. I remember reading that

by the age of 3-5 children are aware of their race. But to actually hear it is something different.

September 11, 2009

Read CRT tenets to ensure that I keep them in mind as I listen to transcripts and transcribe stories.

September 15, 2009

Will need to continue to put themes into broader categories. Educators are supposed to be in education to educate each and every student not to belittle some in “condescending” ways. There is no indication that White students were treated the same. Rather participants perceive that their White teachers thought little of them in terms of being academically capable.

Counselors emerge as a strong theme. Participants relate how counselors treated them, even though they were all honor students. Analysis using Critical Race Theory indicates racism is prevalent. This would include education according to Ladson-Billings who first introduced CRT to education. A second theme that is emerging from this is White privilege. For instance, only White students are selected for gifted programs.

September 16, 2009

I emailed three participants to ask what race/ethnicity they self-identify. They did not share during their self-identification or during any of the interviews.

September 21, 2009

Sent out transcripts for member checking to all participants. I explained to participants I wanted to ensure accuracy of their story and for them to feel free to make

any changes. I also asked them to help me out with words/phrases I was unable to understand. I highlighted inaudible words/phrases for easy reference.

September 22, 2009

Demographic chart is being designed to include pertinent information about participants. For confidentiality participants are given a pseudonym.

September 25, 2009

One participant has emailed to share that her parents did not encourage her to speak Spanish in the home due to their personal experiences speaking Spanish at school. Consequently, her parents did not want her to go through the same. I wonder at this point if all the parents of the participants, those who don't speak Spanish, felt the same way.

October 18, 2009

Made a 5 x 5 chart to plug in categories developed from themes. Under each category I have put a direct quote from each participant. There are five participants, thus there should be at least 3 to 4 quotes for each category.

December 23, 2009

Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 need to change. Chapter 4 changes include:

1. I need to put demographic table immediately after introduction, as a way to organize my chapter.
2. Summary needs to touch on elements common to all participants in each theme. This can also serve as my chapter summary

Chapter 5 changes include:

1. Connecting findings to chapter 4.
2. Care with quotes from participants

January 29, 2010

I have encountered some difficulty locating articles/studies for my literature review. I will add Gilligan and Belenky et al.'s studies as part of my literature review to demonstrate how studies have not included Mexican American women. I will also add more of my definitions from Chapter 1 into Chapter 2. This way my literature review will have a better flow.

April 1, 2010

Made changes to themes of White privilege. After careful consideration, rereading categories, and transcripts. I felt that it would limit my analysis. That is it would leave out pertinent data contributed by participants. Thus, I have used the tenet from CRT: Racism is endemic.

May 5, 2010

Reading the chart with participant quotes has convinced me to rename some categories. My rationale is that if I am using CRT as a framework I need to use the language most appropriate. This should not negate the fact that if I felt a strongly about a certain category I would change it.

September 14, 2010

Deleted "Methodology" section out of chapter 5.

Analytic Documentation

August 21, 2009

In transcribing the interviews I will be able to "hear" what the participants are saying. The tone, pauses and laughter are all part of analyzing the data.

August 22, 2009

I need to make myself comfortable with the observation document. I want to capture as much as I possibly can. The document will definitely add depth and richness to my analysis when I get ready for chapters 4-5.

Participant shared photographs, but not her reflective journal at this time. She definitely talked more about her mother than her father. There is no doubt she cares deeply about her Mexican American mother and the impact her mother made on her life. I will ensure that the transcripts are as accurate as possible. I don't want to misquote or misunderstand what the participants are saying via member checking.

August 24, 2009

It dawned on me that all three participants so far had all been in honor and AP classes. As I reflect back about the pilot and the participants were also in honor/AP classes.

So far the observation checklist indicates all participants have been willing to share. However, I wonder just how much they are willing to share when they member check their individual transcript.

Sent out an email to two participants to clarify if either one spoke any Spanish at home. I gather they were not encouraged to speak Spanish from their interview. However, I need to them to clarify this for me. I do not want to make any assumptions.

August 25, 2009

Got clarification from one participant that she was not encouraged to speak Spanish at home. Interesting also is that she shares I her electronic mail she was

assimilated into the White culture in many ways. This will definitely be part of the data analysis.

Participant emailed me to share an important thought that occurred to her after our interview. I wonder why she didn't share with me during the interview that her faith is her main strength. Perhaps it slipped her mind until later. It is of interest that out of four participants only one participant, was encouraged to speak Spanish by her parents. Seems strange since, one participant has a Mexican born father, who no doubt speaks Spanish. And another participant has admitted her mother speaks Spanish and speaks it with her family members. But it's probably for the same reason I wasn't encouraged – English was what I needed not Spanish to succeed in school.

Just a thought: I believe my interviews so far confirm CRT. In the sense that students of color will succeed if they are seen as “fitting in” and not “being like them”.

September 2, 2009

I emailed participant to ask her to share her reflective journal, I asked her to keep prior to interview, about her experiences in high school during if she is comfortable.

September 3, 2009

Participant shared, from her reflective journal, some strong comments about her peers in high school. Perhaps peers will be another theme. At this point I now have another participant who was in honors. WOW! I do believe all my participants will have the same characteristics.

August 25, 2009

Participant has shared via email that she was encouraged by both her parents to speak Spanish in the home. However, since her parents both spoke English fluently she

grew up speaking mostly English. But at this time she does wish she her father would have taught her Spanish. None of the participants have acknowledged they speak Spanish fluently except for one.

September 4, 2009

I have just finished my fourth interview. And my fourth participant was not only an “Outstanding Senior” she was also in honor and AP classes all throughout high school. Moreover, she also received scholarships to attend postsecondary school. This is a definite factor for all four participants so far.

September 14, 2009

Today participant cried as she reflected on how badly her family members are treated. I shared with her that I would not be using that part of the interview for my study. I hate to see how hurt she was. Racism not only hurts us but it also hurts those we love.

September 21, 2009

At this time all participants self-identify as Mexican either during their interview (2) or via email (3). I guess since we know each other they must have figured I would automatically know – I don’t know what else to think.

September 22, 2009

As I am filling in demographic information I noticed I don’t have three participants’ date of birth. They shared with me their age when asked. But I also know from personal experiences that in the Mexican culture you don’t give your current age, the next age is given. The explanation I was given by my mother is that you are closer to

the next age than the past one I just had. Thus, myself, I am 47 but I share I am 48. I need to make sure this is not the case with participants.

September 23, 2009

Participant has emailed me about writing in her reflective journals. However, the indication is that she does not want to share what she has written. However, I am hopeful she will share orally what she wrote.

October 18, 2009

I came up with 24 broad themes. These themes were narrowed down to 5 categories. The categories include 3 to 4 direct quotes to support each one.

October 19, 2009

Demographic characteristic table for each participant is complete up to this point. The data for each participant, with the exception of siblings, bilingual, and birth order is essentially the same.

January 30, 2010

I have a dissertation guide to follow which will make it easier to conceptualize the sequence and contents of my chapters. The guide includes: Chapters, headings, subheadings, and order of appearance in the document.

February 3, 2010

Simoniello (1981) is the first piece of literature that I have read on Mexican American women and double jeopardy. Contemplating on the study has aided me in keeping my term – Mexican American consistent. In Simoniello's study she uses several terms interchangeably. I want my term "Mexican American" to be consistent except where the author(s) note otherwise to keep faithful to their work/research/study.

February 4, 2010

I have decided that I will include some of the research/studies on African American women due to the lack of studies on Mexican American women. I will draw out the parts in reference to “women of color,” “other,” “gender,” and “race” for reference.

April 1, 2010

Reading participant transcripts and listening again to interview has led me to change categories: First, White privilege to Racism is endemic. Second adjusting to navigating the system. Both changes capture the essence of CRT better.

April 4, 2010

Revised the data collection and data analysis to reflect counterstories not legal storytelling. In Chapter 2 under Critical Race Theory changed non-White to people of color to best reflect the language of CRT.

May 5, 2010

Careful consideration has led me to combine the category coping with navigating the system. A second category that changed was naming racism to social.

July 6, 2010

Took out piece on storytelling. I have gone back and placed it in chapter 3. I don't know why I thought it would fit in the chapter 4.

July 15, 2010

Made other changes in chapter 4 themes I read again what I had categorized and felt it did not fit in TODAY as I had before. The theme was navigating and behavior.

July 1, 2010

Rereading chapter 4 and noted arrangement of profiles are not in order with demographic table. Also, I need to clarify participant statements by using brackets for [White]. As I review my themes I wonder if I shouldn't only have four instead of five. My rationale is to add comments from theme five to the other four categories.

July 3, 2010

Have decided on four themes instead of five. I took off storytelling since this is what participants are doing – telling their story. However, I will include the premises of storytelling in the literature review.

August 4, 2010

After continued reading I realized that depending on the authors on CRT they just take off from the original 6 in words that sound by Matusuda et al. 1993. I have decided to change and use them myself. I had originally gone with Delgado 2001, but careful reading reveals he “tweeked” the third tenet from historical context to social construction.

August 5, 2010

Have decided to keep storytelling as the fourth tenet and place navigating the system as an aspect. I decided after continued reading of Matsuda et al. 1993, p. 6. Not only that I wanted to remain true to the 6 tenets rather than the aspect.

August 17, 2010

Have decided to keep original themes by taking out the word facet. This will eliminate confusion over CRT.

August 18, 2010

Selection of participants' quotes was revised due to redundancy. Information was put into chronological order of process in chapter 3. Also, the coded data was revised to ensure it is consistent throughout all chapters.

August 19, 2010

Findings were further connected to research questions in chapter 4. In addition, themes included more description in the table to clarify them. For instance: empowering others to empowering all students of color and assimilation to assimilation into White culture.

September 25, 2010

To make the content of Chapter 5 clear I will follow this following format: (a) quote, (b) two points of discussion, and (c) connection to CRT.

Personal Response

August 5, 2009

I finally received my approval from IRB. The thought of going over and talking to (name omitted) and asking what is going on crosses my mind. However, I tell myself that I am not the only one who has applied. Not only that if I had gotten on the ball sooner the application may have been approved sooner. Oh, well, no sense in dwelling on it anymore, I have the approval and it is time to move on. I will my e-mail major professor and ask if I can begin my interviews. Major professor replied and stated that I may begin with the interviews!

Wow! How exciting that I am able to conduct interviews. I need to get organized and think thoroughly how I am going to accomplish this. I have my interview protocol, and the participants are lined up. However, I need to schedule a time to meet with them.

I need to ask the participants to keep a reflective journal for triangulation. I think I will send out e-mails out tomorrow. I need to breathe and take in the fact that I am finally on my way. God, who would have ever thought that I could have reached the point to where I am.

August 6, 2009

I sent out emails to 5 potential participants. I hope they all agree! I guess I just wait and see who responds.

I need to be sure and keep my audit trail updated on my thoughts, processes, insights and anything else that I may read either in the literature or the interviews.

August 24, 2009

Excitement. I see one of the participants – I think I will go over and say morning and of course share my news. My participant is excited for me but wants to wait to be interviewed until after children return to school. I am a bit disappointed but I do understand as I reflect back to when my children were in school. I am thinking about when would be a good time to compose my e-mail to participants.

August 21, 2009

Today I am rather apprehensive. I feel a bit out of sorts – guess its just nerves. I feel I should be transcribing, reading, and adding information to my proposal.

August 22, 2009

I need to hustle and figure out something. I have a time line that I have fallen behind on reading and editing chapters 1-3.

The drive down to Wichita gives me time to mentally review the interview process. I have only met this participant once before so I am glad that she has agreed to the study. I am nervous and excited, as usual, but I know I will get a great interview.

August 23, 2009

Sunday I did not read or transcribe as I had hoped to. The trip to and from Wichita took a toll on my body. I went to my meeting then napped and relaxed the remainder of the day.

August 26, 2009

The term stereotype came up in connection with low expectations. I need to ensure that I use the terms. What a sentence a participant put together to express her feelings during high school.

Reading the transcript about educators was like going down memory lane for me. Why is it that some educators who are able to influence students in such positive ways opt to do just the opposite and tear them down based on their race.. Shared with Dr. Taylor my progress and requested a time to meet with her to review what I have accomplished so far.

September 2, 2009

Met with Dr. Taylor and reviewed what I have been doing. She was encouraging.

September 3, 2009

I need to share with Dr. Taylor that 4 out of 5 participants share the same characteristics. I wonder about the fifth participant.

September 3, 2009

Dr. Taylor shared some literature that will be good for me to read. I have printed and read it.

September 4, 2009

I can't believe that all my participants were in advanced classes and got scholarships to attend college. This is great stuff.

September 16, 2009

While meeting with Dr. Taylor I discovered I made a HUGE mistake in assuming race/ethnicity for three participants. Dr. Taylor suggests I ask participants to self-identify. I will email them and ask – gee what a blunder on my part. I feel I should have known better.

September 21, 2009

I can't believe that I am finally done transcribing the interviews. I listened to tape and interviews three different times to make sure I transcribed it accurately. I will wait and see what participants think as they member check for clarity and accuracy.

September 22, 2009

Dr. Taylor suggested I include ages for all participants in demographic chart. I thought it would be easy enough to retrieve from transcripts but I noticed that three participants did not volunteer their date of birth. I would have thought they all would have since they were asked to “self describe” themselves towards the beginning of the interview. And towards the end they were asked to share where they want to be. Oh, well.

December 23, 2009

I have finally received my chapters four and five back from my editor. She suggests changes for chapters. I will discuss suggestions with major professor.

February 3, 2010

Who would have thought that literature on Mexican American women would be so limited. When the literature speaks about Mexican Americans it lumps women in with them, as if though the experiences of women are the same as those of men. On the other hand, what is written about women is from mostly White women and they write as if though the experiences of Mexican American woman are like theirs without understanding how race fits in.

May 10, 2010

Today it dawned on me that my categories were not as clear as they should be. They did not indicate what I was trying to capture. I don't know what I was thinking.

September 1, 2010

Made corrections to chapters 1-4. I can't believe that when I read a document it reads fine to me. However, when someone else reads it they find it does not read as I thought.

September 15, 2010

I was thinking today as I reread chapter 5 if I used something like "Analysis used was CRT to analyze research question 1 and counselors, educators, and peers maltreatment towards Mexican American students" would facilitate connection between CRT, research question, and results.

Appendix E - Interview Observation Checklist

Interviewing Observation, Non-verbal Cue Interpretation (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

Body Movements		
Move Toward Interviewer	Arms open	Legs open
Move Away From Interviewer	Arms crossed	Legs crossed
Eye Contact	Avoided Stared	Narrowed Normal
Hand Gestures	Calm Nervous Clasped Tented	Wring Twist Click Nail
Touching	Touches Interviewer	Avoids Interviewer
Aerial Gestures	Small Large	Frequent Seldom
Head Inclination	Up Down	Toward Away
Facial Expression	Frown Smile	Deadpan Other
Eyebrows	Raised Lowered	Smooth Together
Teeth	Gritted Relaxed	Smiling Neutral
Physiological Signs	Sweating Clammy Finger tapping	Tics Jiggles: Face Foot Leg
Timing	Kept interviewer waiting Cut short interview	Long pauses Inappropriate Smiles
Reaction Pacing	Interrupts Quick Answers	Long Pauses Stumbles over words of others
Speech Patterns	Tone: Calm Low Errors Sarcastic	Agitated High Ironic Humor
Relaxed State	Tense Relaxed	Sleepy Alert
Other Notes:		